Sea Horses

SEA HORSES

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ROBERT BRIDGES: A Critical Study
MARCHING ON TANGA

SEA HORSES

FRANCIS BRETT YOUNG

New York

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PUBLISHED, APRIL, 1925 ·
SECOND PRINTING, APRIL, 1925 ·
THIRD PRINTING, JULY, 1925 ·

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO

ROBERT DOLBEY

REMEMBERING
HANDENI 1916; *GHEZIRA* 1922,
AND FOR LOVE OF
TEMESIDE

CHAPTER ONE

I

At a collapsible teak table, beneath the glassy eye of the for'ard porthole Glanvil sat with his pen suspended. His long legs were cramped sideways by these narrow quarters; his hunched shoulders cast upon the paper before him a shadow over which his hand hung like a brown kite that hovers before it swoops. On the bulkhead in front of him a photograph supended in an oval frame tilted, deliberately, then poised and recovered, like a piece of metal swayed by invisible magnets. As it moved across the teak panels with a scratching sound above a steady rhythm of engines that passed for silence in Glanvil's mind, his eyes followed it, and the eyes of the portrait seemed to watch him as they moved. They were dark and deep on either side of a boldly modelled nose; and the face, which was that of a middle-aged woman, was only a softened version of his own, with lips that were thinner and set in a faintly critical smile. His eyes left the portrait and returned to the heading of his letter: *SS. Vega, Near Naples, December 12th.* The fingers, which had seemed too uncouth for such a delicate matter, descended; he began to write once more in a firm, downright hand.

My dear Mother,

I did not write you from Port Said because if I post this in Naples it will reach you just as soon. No news to speak of. Since coaling (Colombo) we have had a good trip. Pretty cool in the Red Sea. I expect orders for home at Naples, and I can tell you I shan't be sorry to get rid of the emigrants we have on board and the copra we took on at Singapore. You can smell both of them all over the ship, copra beetles everywhere. Five days after you get this we ought to see Barry Dock, and with any luck I shall get home for Christmas Day.

He paused as though the continuation of the letter embarrassed him, glancing backward toward the foot of his bunk where a black satin *kakemono* brightened the panels with a lilac cascade of wistaria.

I forgot to tell you that I bought another of those Japanese hangings at Colombo, wistaria, to match the one with irises you have in the front room. Also I got one of those Jap artists to do a portrait on silk from that snapshot of Elsie Tyrer. It's a good picture but not very like. They can't understand that an English girl's eyes don't turn up at the corners, the same as theirs. I'd a good mind to tear it up, but I dare say she'll like to have it. By Jove, I shall be glad to get home again though. One's first command is enough to turn one grey, especially with these Italians on board, but never mind. On Christmas Day I shall be able to kiss you good morning.—So cheer up,

Your loving son,
George.

He addressed the letter: 94 *Berry Head Road, Brixham, Devon,* and, as he stared at what he had written and added, in precise capitals, the word *England,* his inward eye recreated an image of the place toward which a series of foreign hands would hurry the envelope that he had just inscribed. The narrow chamber which had been his home for the last six months receded, and in its place he saw an amphitheatre of stucco and glistening slates: hundreds of little individual houses rising tier on tier, outstaring each other across the chasm which was the inner harbour, and that chasm filled with blown veils of westerly drizzle torn and carded by the Lupton woods, penetrated from sky and roadway, from house-roof and harbour, by the same steely light.

Near Christmas the anchorage would be crowded with smacks that had swooped in like pigeons at sunset, and now rode bare-masted, swinging weather-vanes; and on the road above the moorings, lashed by rain and spray like the bridge of a ship at sea, the postman would go reeling beneath his load of Christmas parcels and stand, with dripping oilskins, on the step of Number Ninety-four. Then Mrs. Glanvil would come to the door, and Roper, the postman, his eyes glistening beneath shaggy brows beaded with rain, would say: "Mornin', Mrs. Glanvil. Any chance of your George coming home-along this Christmas?" and she would answer proudly: "If you'll bide a minute, Mr. Roper, I'll tell you. I think this letter comes from Italy." And Roper would stand dripping another minute before he hitched up his parcels and passed on with the news that George Glanvil was expected.

In Brixham small things made up the news; by evening half the town would know that he was coming; but who would care? A handful of old square-rig captains who stumped up and down the harbour parapet talking of dead men and broken ships; among them his father, Peter Glanvil, and the schooner *Pilgrim*. To these his name would loosen reminiscence, for he represented the continuity of the tradition in which they had been reared. But when they grasped his hand with their gouty fingers and asked him about his last voyage, it was only as an excuse for remembering their own sea-faring in the days before steam, when captains were still seamen. Elsie Tyrer's father was one of them.

Elsie Tyrer. . . . His mind passed backward to the June day when he had left Brixham to join his ship. His mother had stood over him as he packed, anxious to lose no moment of his company. A breeze, warm, but so faint that the russet sails flapped and the trawlers smoked and lounged on board waiting for a chance to slip their moorings, troubled the muslin curtains of the front bedroom; and, at the last moment, he had secreted in his breast-pocket the snapshot of Elsie that he had taken on a picnic at Mansands. He had been half ashamed that his mother should see him do this. Why he did not know; for all through the month that his owners allowed him, he and Elsie had been much together. His mother had watched them; sometimes she had even seemed to encourage, and yet it had felt like a piece of bravado when he had given the snapshot to the Jap to copy. The roll of silk had come back to him within twelve hours, and on it he had seen the face he knew and the cheek that he had once

kissed, curiously orientalized and refined. Later this mingling of likeness and unlikeness had become disturbing. Riding in a ricksha through Malay Street, the *yoshiwara* of Singapore, he had caught sight of a Japanese woman whose painted face seemed to reconcile the difference and sent him back to his ship shaken, burning with an indefinite desire. Since leaving Colombo he had never once looked at the portrait. The thing was unclean and better left to lie in its cardboard tube. And now, almost against his will, it had thrust itself into his letter, an evil influence whose power could only be exorcised by the sight of its original. Ten more days.

It was better to marry than to burn, and better, particularly, for a sailor. His twenty years at sea had taught him that, if nothing else. Some of his contemporaries, boys who had served their apprenticeship with him, were married already. Only a few weeks ago he had met one of them, a fellow from Barnstaple named Northcote, who was now third officer on one of Holt's Blue Funnels. They had sat on the terrace of Raffles' Hotel drinking tepid German beer, listening to the padding of rickshaboys' feet, watching the lizards that hunted on the *loggia* ceiling, while Northcote had expounded to him the incredible accuracy of compound multiplication and the damned difficulty of making two ends meet on ten pounds a month plus bonus. "But it's worth it, George, old boy," he had said, beginning to talk about a four-roomed house with a white flagstaff in front of it, and green painted windows from which you could see the light on Braunton Burrows and Lundy lifting cloudlike out of a grey-green sea. "I reckon I'll just get home to set some potatoes

up at the back," he said. "Living as we do, every little helps, and my girl's as plucky as a lion."

These confidences had affected Glanvil deeply. He knew that, if he wanted to, there was no reason why he shouldn't plant potatoes for his mother at the back of the house on Berry Head. It was unreasonable that gardening should seem romantic in one case and not in another. When he had paid for the drinks and parted with Northcote he sat on, lonely in the warm night, reflecting that though success had made him the youngest master in his company and given him a salary four times as great as that which Northcote earned, he had as yet no home that he could call his own. "With me," he thought, "it isn't any longer a question of means; I'm putting by money every month. It's cautiousness, shyness; it's just the way I happen to be made. And the old woman."

There rose in his mind the pale face of Mrs. Glanvil, so curiously like his own in its severity; on its lips he saw the guarded smile with which she had looked at him and Elsie Tyrer; at that moment, loving, he almost disliked her: her smile made him feel selfish, undutiful. To escape from himself he had hailed a ricksha and gone bowling softly through a haze of Chinese smiles toward Malay Street, which all ricksha boys know to be the natural destination of sailors ashore, and there he had seen one face that still troubled and mocked him, and another, that of his own second officer, Cochran. From the bridge above him came a metallic staccato. Five bells. Voices in the alley-way. His steward, a Cantonese with muddy, pock-marked face, filled the doorway.

"Dinner leady, sir."
"All right. I'm coming."

2

Glanvil entered the saloon, leaving his speculations behind him. The five-bell strokes recalled him from his privacy to take his place in that mechanism of blood and nerves and steel which was the *Vega*: a speck of kindling light urged by the palpable heartbeats of her engines over the dusky surface of the Tyrrhenian. Of this complex organism Glanvil's brain was the controlling cell. In his own cabin he had been a fallible human being, the prey of doubts, hopes and desires; at the head of the table in the saloon he became automatically the Master of a ship at sea; a creature incapable of passions, harsh, dehumanized, and inevitably lonely.

The fact that each of the men on either side of him, Cheadle, the chief engineer, and Hendry, the first officer, were older than himself had forced him to exaggerate the formality of his position, and the maintenance of this relation, which, in the early days of the voyage, had seemed artificial and awkward, had now become second-nature to him. Apart from his delight and pride in his ship he had been happier as a chief officer. He spoke rarely, and more rarely smiled.

That night, tempted by the prospect of landing at Naples, letters from home, and sailing orders, the ship's company, their angles and asperities long since rubbed smooth by seafaring at close quarters, like pebbles on a

thunderous beach, became individual and communicative. Cheadle, long-nosed, taciturn and yellow with the oil-mist of his engines, became expansive over a bottle of stout. For the first time in five nights he forgot to grumble at the quality of the coal they had taken in at Port Said and began to talk of his home at Newton-in-Makerfield, a place half-way between Manchester and Liverpool, of a green-house in which he tended chrysanthemums that he might rarely hope to see in flower, and of his three sons, Albert, Edward and George, whose education was the principal burden of his life. "This time eleven days," he said, "I guess the old woman'll be waiting for me on the platform at Lime Street. Corned pork and beans. Third time this week. Pass the Worcester sauce, Mr. Cochran."

The second officer, a small, tough Ulsterman, with a broken nose, a low crop-haired forehead, and coarse red mouth, passed the bottle in silence. In his pale eyes, carefully averted, lurked a smile; for once, on the dock-side at Birkenhead he had seen Mrs. Cheadle, an enormous woman with a red, dyspeptic nose, who had carried away the Chief, a cringing captive in a bowler hat.

"Corned pork and beans," Cheadle repeated. "I hope the chief steward will get hold of something a bit fresher in Naples."

"What I look forward to," said Hendry, a ruddy thick-set Scotsman who took life easily, "is the first dinner my missus gives me on shore. First-rate cook she is." He turned to Glanvil politely: "It's five years since we got married, sir, and I don't suppose we've had six months

together from first to last. You're not a married man, sir, so you don't know what that means."

"Cochran does, though," grunted the Chief, "from what I saw of him on the Circular Quay at Sidney."

Cochran reddened, but made no answer. He and Cheadle were enemies of long standing, and he knew the virtues of silence. Beneath his crusty bark, wind-battered and pickled with brine like the blistered flanks of the *Vega,* he hid a core of rude strength: strength of muscle and of purpose, crude and virile. Sitting round-shouldered at the table, his cropped head bent low over his plate, he seemed an ill-shapen creature. Stripped to bathe, as Glanvil had seen him in the Indian Ocean, his torso was as heavily braced with muscle as that of a Highland bull. Beside him the Chief, in the impotence of a settled middle age, seemed flabby and sexless.

"Suppose you'll go ashore at Naples, Cochran?" Cheadle continued.

The Second still kept his silence, and Hendry, whose good-humoured eye had caught the presage of a new quarrel, filled the breach.

"You remember Jefferies, the chief officer of the *Sirius,* sir?"

"Jefferies?" Glanvil repeated. "Yes, I know him."

"Jefferies isn't in the *Sirius,*" Cheadle interrupted, "Jackson's the chief officer of the *Sirius,* and has been for the last two voyages."

"Jackson's in the *Aldebaran,*" Cochran grunted.

"In the *Aldebaran,* is he? As it happens Jackson's almost a neighbour of mine. Jackson's people live at

Earlestown. Jackson's father used to have a job on the ship-canal, so I should think I ought to know something about Jackson." Cheadle's voice became shrill: "Wilfrid, that's his name; and he's got a younger brother in Nelson's."

"Well, I don't want to quarrel over it, Chief," said Hendry with a smile. "It's Jefferies I was talking about, not Jackson. Voyage before last or the voyage before that—it's not much odds—I saw old Jefferies on the *Sirius*. We were tied up alongside her at Tanjong Pagar."

He paused for a moment to continue his neglected meal. "Well, you know what Jefferies is. If you met him ashore you'd think he was a duke. He got married just about the same time as I did; met the girl at a dance of some kind in Birkenhead."

"That's Jefferies to a T," growled Cheadle. "A chap like Jefferies is lost on this company. What he wants is brass-bound uniform and a boiled shirt and lady passengers on the boat-deck. Dancing——!"

"But what I was going to say, sir," Hendry mildly proceeded, "was what old Jefferies told me. He wanted to make his honeymoon last, like all the rest of us; so when he gets home he and his wife dress themselves up for dinner every night. Old Jefferies wears a dinner-jacket and a white tie and his wife puts on a low-necked dress, just the same as they were when they met each other. Then old Jefferies turns on the gramophone and his missus rolls back the carpets and they have a dance on their own."

At the bottom of the table Cochran sniggered; Cheadle

pushed the plate away from him as if the story had tainted his food.

"Indecent," he said; "that's what I call it, indecent. I call that treating your wife as if she were no better than a prostitute. I don't know what the officers in this company are coming to. If I started treating my wife like that. . . . I remember old Macaulay, when he was chief engineer of the *Altair*. . . . No, I'm wrong; in those days he was on the *Aldebaran*—you should have heard the sense he used to talk about marriage. He used to say——"

And so it went on: names and ways of men; names and ways of ships, petty differences of opinion on matters of fact, place, and time, over which Glanvil sat judicially as the final court of appeal, a lonely arbiter, knowing no more than those over whom he sat in judgment. So it had been from the first days of the voyage before the officers had sickened of each other's company; but of late, and particularly in the hotter stages of the voyage, Cheadle had grown more querulously perverse, Cochran more sullen, and Hendry less equable in his good humour. Men and ships; these, at least, were safe topics of conversation, less disturbing than the talk of women that unconsciously penetrated and dominated them as soon as a ship passed from the monastic seclusion of the high seas within range of the communicable passions of life on shore; and Glanvil knew that, even though no word were spoken, this virus burned in the blood of the whole ship's company like spores of a foreign pestilence invading virgin islands. He saw the same infection fevering in different degree the sallow face of Cheadle, Hendry's

ruddy cheeks and the knot of potent bone and muscle which was Cochran. He felt it himself and was humiliated, unreasonably, since he was no less a man than the others.

So he brooded as he sat, sullenly it seemed, at the head of the table. The others, wrapped in their thoughts, were silent; all except Cheadle, who leaned back sucking his teeth. Ghostly in black dungarees the Chinese steward circulated. Somewhere in the darkness outside a whistle shrilled, and a moment later the bo's'n stood blinking in the door of the saloon.

"Third officer's compliments, sir, and he'll soon be abeam of Campanella."

"That means we shall get in in a couple of hours," said Hendry cheerfully.

Glanvil nodded.

"Tell Mr. Harvey I'm coming," he said.

3

Glanvil braced himself to meet the cold as he mounted the bridge. The night was almost windless, for the northerly gale whose swell had met them bow-on as they twisted out of the Strait of Messina, had now fallen or whirled itself elsewhere, dragging in its wake a faltering draught of air, icy with Apennine snows, that penetrated by reason of the ship's progress rather than of its own force. In a sky, newly scoured by cold, dry air, the stars burned with a hard fixed stillness. Over Vesuvius the Plough rose tilted like a cobra curved backward to strike; on the port bow, above the yellow smoulder of Naples, the

Lyre was setting, and amongst its stars he recognized the blue pulse of Vega.

For fifteen years he had been interested in the constellations from which his company derived the names of their ships, and even before he had set foot on the *Vega* this star had specially fascinated him, partly for the purity of its throbbing rays, and partly because he had read somewhere that it marked the direction in which the solar system was travelling through space. In twelve thousand years, the text-book told him, Vega would become the pole-star of the world. It had been easy enough for a sailor in the night watches to realize the eastward rolling of a globe to which adhered that film of moisture which was his chosen element and his relentless adversary; but while this wonder often filled his brooding mind, it was as nothing to the immensity which the first sight of this star of destiny on a clear night flashed into his brain. Its radiance had become a touchstone. "Twelve thousand years," he thought as he swung himself up the last step on to the bridge and reduced to their right proportion the preoccupations that had engrossed him below.

In that moment, turning to port, he became aware of an impending pyramidal darkness, blacker than any night, that seemed to have torn into the tissue of starry light like a tooth. Gazing northward he had failed to notice this rampart of cliff that dwarfed the channel with its thousand feet of sheer limestone. Smiling at his own surprise, he approached the solitary figure on the bridge, Harvey, his third officer, the best of the bunch, the man of all his company with whom he could have made friends if friendship had been possible. Harvey, too, was

Devon born; they spoke the same language, knew the same landmarks. Physically, even, they had in common the colour of men whose blood springs from the debatable borders of Tamar, Severn or Wye, blue eye and olive skin. Now Harvey leaned on the rail, gazing upward at the black crags, unconscious of Glanvil's approach, and Glanvil envied him this unconsciousness, for it seemed to him a symbol of youth, of his own youth, pitiful, irrevocable.

"All well, Mr. Harvey?"

The third officer straightened himself and saluted.

"All well, sir."

"That's the Island of Capri."

"Yes, sir. First time I've seen it so close. I was wondering if any foreigners lived there. . . . English, I mean."

"I think so. They run a steamboat over from Naples every day. There's a grotto that all the tourists go to."

"Yes, sir. I've got a book in my cabin on the Mediterranean; picked it up in a second-hand shop in Plymouth last summer . . . summer before last, that is. Apparently this is the place where the Sirens came from."

"Sirens?"

The word awakened no definite echo in Glanvil's mind; his life had been too full of the sea's practical activities and its long spells of inaction to give much thought to books. And he had done rightly, he told himself. He had stuck to his job as he had learnt it: and that was why he stood to-night on the bridge of the *Vega*, master of the destinies of seventy souls. Every ambition that he had set himself to attain had been realized; he had

made of himself the perfect machine. At the price of all humanity. Now, proud and bitter, he saw the boy Harvey standing where he himself had stood fifteen years before and told himself that he did not envy him.

Slowly, the loom of Capri lifted, and fell astern; the gulf opened its arms; Naples, no longer a nebula, resolved itself into a myriad pinpoints of light among which the beacon of the harbour drilled into the jet of night like a diamond. Forty feet below them, in the shadow of the well-deck, the emigrants whom they had embarked at Perth, emerged. They clustered together, coats thrown over their shoulders like cloaks, clutching each others' shoulders, pointing with outstretched arms in the attitude of heroic pictures. Out of their starling chatter, above the metallic tremors of a mandoline played softly, Glanvil recognized the word Sorrento tossed from mouth to mouth.

A thin, dark man in a black cloak climbed on to the fo'c'sle-head and poised himself on the top of a winch, laughing, posturing, stretching out his arms like bat-wings, so unsubstantial that a puff of wind might have sent him fluttering to land. *"Sor-r-rento!"* he cried, and the word was like an incantation. His arms lifted and quivered: *"Che bel-l-lezza!"* The thrill of his incantation ran through the little crowd below him like a kindling fire; they were shaken, as homing migrants might be shaken by the green smell of land, and one, a hooded gnome who had crouched in silence on the hatch-cover, was moved to sing in a high, sweet quaver that pierced the heart:

Io la vidi a Piedigrotta,
Tutta a festa era parata
Per veder la truppa in frotta,
Dalla madre accompagnata:
'Na giacchetta aggallonata,
'Na pettiglia ricamata,
'Na gonnella cremisina
E due fiocchi da incantar. . . .
E la bella Sorrentina
La sentiva nominar!

The others listened, staring at the dark and sober outlines of the land; but their eyes penetrated its blackness, seeing the orange groves under their screens of matting, the smoky silver of olives, the vaulted cabins that crumbled in the coils of ancient vines.

Glanvil turned his back on them and stood staring southward where a wisp of smoke from the *Vega's* funnel fled between him and the stars. The voice of Harvey reached him, uncanny in its nearness.

"Most of these fellows come from Sorrento, sir. You can imagine what they feel."

"How do you know that they come from Sorrento?" he asked in a voice of unnatural harshness.

"Been through their papers with the chief officer, sir."

E la bella Sorrentina
Non ha mai di me pietà!

sang the gnome on the hatch-cover.

Hendry and Cheadle paced the main deck together.

"Listen to that dago," said the chief officer. "I draw the line at passengers, anyway; but when it comes to that scum——"

"Ay," said Cheadle gloomily, "like a damned dog howling at the moon. If you want to hear singing, that's singing, so to say, you should come to our chapel at Newton for harvest festival."

Glanvil stood silent and rather cold on the bridge at Harvey's side. The singing did not please him, and yet, even though the emotion might be spurious, he had to confess that he was moved by it. The secret progress of the *Vega,* whose submerged hull stole forward with no sound but the lazy plunk of her engines towards that brightening crescent, the mountains meek in starlight that watched her like drowsy monsters, these, of themselves, were enough to make the moment distinct in beauty; but the remote tinkle of the mandoline and the love-song that accompanied it seemed to add something that was personal, human, reproachful, to stamp the whole scene on Glanvil's mind with the lovely and indelible shape of things seen once in youth and never afterwards. His mind reacted bitterly against this assault on his feelings, his lips threw out a challenge:

"Well, Mr. Harvey?" he asked.

Harvey laughed softly.

"See Naples and live, sir," came the inevitable reply.

4

Two hours later, in harbour water lustrous but lifeless, the *Vega* floated stern-on to the quay like a harpooned

whale. Over her carcase swarmed the hordes of stevedores whose duty it was to disembowel her. Above a pandemonium of shrill dialect, in the clatter of unbattening hatches, and the confusing gleams and shadows of conflicting lights, Hendry, his face disorted by impotent violence, stood shouting curses that no one but the crew could understand. Cheadle had retired to his bunk and shut out the noise. The light that stared from the porthole of his cabin was the only index of life on the upper deck. Within he lay, his spectacles tilted on his thin nose, absorbing the latest news of Newton-in-Makerfield, while Cochran, who had hurried ashore on an obvious errand, went plugging up the quayside, like a coaster in a choppy sea, leaving behind him a wake of breathless touts.

In his own cabin Glanvil sat waiting for the agent to arrive. Within half an hour the Cantonese entered with a card printed in florid italics: *Marx & Esposito.* Then followed a miracle of Neapolitan spruceness. On the middle finger of his right hand he took care to display a spurious cameo; the fifth was armed with a long, pointed talon which testified to the gentility of his employment. As he sat at the table of the saloon, to which Glanvil led him in silence, his head was almost impressive: dark eyes, straight brows, a Roman nose, lips finely, scornfully curved, teeth regularly and magnificently white; but when he stood upright in the need to be dramatic, the impression of strength and classic form was suddenly shattered; for his feet were small as those of a woman, constricted in kid-topped varnished boots of which he was evidently conscious; his spindle legs and narrow chest reduced the rest of his physique to insignificance. Glanvil, as he

looked at him, felt himself uncouth and at the same time superior; he knew that, for all his slowness and heaviness, he was this man's better, and the consciousness of superiority and difference put him in the wrong, compelling him to show a politeness that he did not feel.

They faced one another in an atmosphere of grudging hostility, like two animals of the same genus, but of different breed; and this hostility which in the case of Glanvil expressed itself in a forced friendliness, spurred the other to an exhibition of the very qualities that had aroused Glanvil's distaste. Over his second whisky the Neapolitan became familiar.

"Say, captain," he began in an accent which he had derived from both sides of the Atlantic, "my name's Esposito. I've served my time in Newhaven, Connecticut, and Cardiff, so you and me can understand each other. I'm not only Mr. Marx's partner; I'm what you might call his right-hand man. He leaves all the shipping business to me, and if there's any matter on which I can put you wise, I'm at your service. Suppose we get on to business right now?"

Glanvil nodded. The sooner he was rid of the fellow the better.

"Say, boy," Esposito proceeded, "I guess I've got a bit of a surprise packet for you." He put his finger to his nose. "But don't you get scared; there's money in it. I guess you thought you were going right on to Liverpool for Christmas? Is that so? Well, that's your error. Our firm, Mr. Marx and myself, that is, has chartered this steamer for a trip to Africa. I can see you're not pleased; but that's neither here nor there. You'll get all

the facts in your letter from your owners. In the meantime——"

Glanvil had risen quickly, his first disappointment flaming into unreasonable anger. It was monstrous that the *Vega* should be hawked round the Mediterranean like a coaster fit for the scrap-heap; monstrous that his own loyalty should have been sold to the bidding of this perfumed dago, that all the meditation and scheming which had coloured his landfall should be sacrificed and broken. The owners might be damned! He would cable to them, break his contract, resign his command rather than submit. Then he saw the dark eyes of the Neapolitan, amused and tolerant. Pride steadied him.

"Go on, Mr. Esposito," he said. "I'm sorry I interrupted."

The other inclined his head graciously.

"I see you're a bit put out, captain," he said; "but, say, business is business. Don't you have any fear of me and Mr. Marx. We shall see you through, and if you make the most of your opportunity you won't be the loser. We're sending your ship to Panda. Never heard of it? In a year or two, you can take my word, people in the shipping world will know all about Panda. The finest harbour on the east coast. Magnificent. Now the only question is, how long it will take you to discharge your cargo. It's my intention, if possible, to get you off within ten days. What do you say to that?"

Glanvil had not been listening; his mind was still swept by hurtling, indignant phrases through which the question reached him like a voice blown on the wind. He heard it repeated. "What do you say to that?"

"I won't say anything," he answered roughly, "until I see what my owners say about it."

The other threw wide his hands in a gesture of compliance. "Certainly, certainly." He took a twisted torpedo of a cigar from his waistcoat pocket, broke it with his talons and stuck one half in his mouth. There he sat with the ragged stump unlit, watching Glanvil as he selected from the pile of papers a long envelope with the Liverpool post-mark, and glanced at the typewritten sheet.

Compliments, and then excuses: they might have spared him both. The letter was friendly but explicit.

Owing to the continued scarcity of exports we have chartered the ship to our Naples agents, Marx and Esposito, the contract renewable monthly. Mr. Marx is an old and trusted correspondent, and we look to you to give him your best service and oblige him in every possible respect.

Glanvil laid aside the letter.

Esposito, with almost a flourish, lit his cigar.

"All in order?"

"Yes. Everything is in order."

Esposito, with another flourish, began to pour out a third peg of whisky into Glanvil's glass, and, when it was refused, replenished his own.

"Salute!" he said. "Good health!" and immediately plunged into the details of his cargo. Since the war, he said, freight had been scarce on the coast, the Deutsch-Ost-Afrika no longer ran there, and the Union-Castle

service, as well as that of the Marittima Italiana, was irregular. Of course they preferred to send their cargoes in Italian bottoms; but when these were not available—a gesture completed the sentence.

"And so Mr. Marx and myself, who have big interests on that coast, decided to charter, if possible, one of the ships of our good friends. Now I will tell you why Panda is important. Panda itself, no; but the country behind it. They are building a railroad into the interior. It now reaches within three hundred kilometres of Panda; in another two years it will have touched the coast. Wait till you see that harbour! And the engineers who build the railway are Italian. You see? Money—money—so much money, and nothing to spend it on; no women, no luxuries, nothing! All along that line there are engineers and labourers waiting to spend money. Mr. Marx and I see the occasion; a cargo of luxuries. Gin, brandy, vermouth, canned goods, maccheroni; everything that can remind a man of home."

He rose with a swagger and laid his hand on Glanvil's arm. The gesture, offensively familiar, enveloped Glanvil in an aura of alcohol, scent and garlic that sickened him; but the Italian was evidently insensitive to this distaste.

"Say, boy, we shan't forget you," he whispered thickly. "One and a half per cent. commission, that's Mr. Marx's idea. Generous, eh? And we leave you the chance of making a few dollars on your own. Oh, it's a gay spot, is Panda. You and your boys will have the chance of a little run around." He gave an obscene wink that made Glanvil wince. "Trust me to know what sailors are! Now what about this cargo?"

"That's the chief officer's province. You can be sure that he'll discharge it as quickly as possible. I can't answer for your labourers on shore."

"But I can, boy. Everything in this port is a matter of graft. Now if we can speed things up a bit by——" He rubbed his thumb and index finger together in a gesture with which every man who has sailed the Mediterranean is familiar.

"Look here, Mr. Esposito," Glanvil broke in, "I take it that I draw my pay from my own people. Between you and me there's no question of money. You've chartered this ship, and I'm ready to take her wherever you choose to send her. I'm ready to meet you according to my owners' instructions, and that's that. I don't want to be encouraged by tips like a waiter or a cabman. I hope we understand each other."

Esposito tilted his head. "Sure, sure," but in his realistic eyes the contempt with which he beheld this foolish integrity was visible. "Sure, boy. Always trust an Englishman." He held out his hand, and Glanvil unwillingly took it, consoled by the thought that the interview was ended. But Esposito had not finished.

"There's just one more thing," he said, hesitating, feeling his way into Glanvil's stormy mind. "We have a letter from your owners which contains a copy of the one they sent to you. Mr. Marx and I can read between the lines; it shows the confidence they have in you, very flattering. Oblige us in every possible respect, they say. Trust us not to be unreasonable, but in this particular case we ask a favour. You understand; so few ships going to Panda in these days. A passenger."

The word was a spark to fulminate Glanvil's impatience.

"Passenger? No, sir. This is not a passenger ship. If I have an order to take on coolies or pilgrims or emigrants, like the bunch we've just landed, it's a different matter. But when it comes to favours, I don't expect them and I don't give them. In matters of business I'm at your service."

Esposito smiled and waved his cigar in assent.

"Understood—understood. This is a case of charity; my partner will explain."

"He can spare himself the trouble, Mr. Esposito. This ship is going through the Suez Canal. If we carry passengers you know as well as I do that her category will be changed. You'll have to pay canal dues on a higher scale."

Esposito laughed softly. "Say, captain, I know how you feel. A nod's as good as a wink. But I know as well as *you* do that the canal regulations are no more watertight than the canal. Never heard of a two-thousand-ton freighter carrying three pursers? In this case you can sign on the lady as stewardess."

"The lady? Good God, man, what are you talking about?"

Esposito's head began to wag with submerged chuckles at Glanvil's naïve alarm. "Say no more about it, boy. I've known the men who would jump at it. I'll leave Mr. Marx to explain. To-morrow? You can treat me as a friend, captain; don't forget that. Anything that I can put you in the way of ashore? Nothing? To-morrow, then. *A rivederci!*"

He went ashore, and Glanvil, his head still hot with

anger, stood staring like a fool at the papers he had left on the table. He needed time to recover from the disgust and resentment with which this interview had inspired him. He sat back in the swivelling chair at the head of the table and swallowed a peg of whisky. Beneath the clatter of winches and the excited cries of the stevedores he heard once more the tinkle of a mandoline and a chorus of high-pitched voices; a boat-load of street singers serenading the next ship, a Transatlantic that dwarfed the *Vega* with her belts of light.

Iámmo, Iámmo, ncoppa iámmo ja'.

Into the door of the saloon sidled another figure, a debased Esposito, with strings of coral beads slung on his arm. He held them out to Glanvil with a pleading smile. "Fine corals. Want to buy, gentleman? Too cheap."

Glanvil jumped to his feet. "Get out of this!" The man smiled and dangled his corals. Glanvil hustled him on to the deck, and pushed him towards the gangway. What the hell was Harvey doing? He should have posted a man at the head of it to keep these fellows off. In place of a quartermaster he found only a Carabineer in a long cloak and cocked hat, who stared blankly when he tried to explain himself. He blew his whistle and a crop-headed seaman ran for'ard. Glanvil checked an impulse to let fly.

"Tell the third officer I want him at once," he commanded.

But when Harvey came his immediate anger had sub-

sided, and he spoke in the formal tones that had become habitual to him.

"Is that you, Harvey? Please see that a watch is placed at the head of the gangway and kept there. I'm not going to have these ruffians on deck."

"Very good, sir. Mr. Hendry asked me to lend him a hand."

"The chief officer can look after his own job," Glanvil answered shortly. He turned towards the saloon, then hesitated: "Harvey."

"Yes, sir?"

"I've just had our orders from Liverpool. The ship has been chartered to our agents here. That puts a stopper on our having Christmas at home."

He looked at Harvey with a smile. It did him good to be brutal against his own will. Cruelty was the only possible outlet for his disappointment, and Harvey its proper object. But Harvey took the blow without wincing. His eyes brightened with eagerness.

"Yes, sir. Where are they sending us?"

"Portuguese East Africa."

"That's good, sir. I've always wanted to get down that coast."

Sublime selfishness of youth! It was ludicrous to think how his futile ill-humour had recoiled on him. Glanvil laughed.

"Fortunate for you," he said. "It's a nasty knock for some of us though."

"I'm sorry for that, sir."

Of course he was not sorry. Glanvil knew it and envied him.

"Very well, Harvey. Go and see to that gangway." He spoke shortly.

He returned to his cabin which was dim in lamp-light, stifling, and unusually silent, for now that her engines had ceased to beat the *Vega* was like a dead ship. He took up the remainder of his unopened mail and stretched himself out on his bunk with his hands behind his head. He could not read; he was conscious of the fiasco into which his emotions on the bridge had led him, the stupidity with which he had imagined that he could make a confidant of a boy like Harvey. Better to have taken Cheadle into his confidence, Cheadle, behind whose deference to him he suspected a grudging contempt. Cheadle and Hendry were nearer to him than Harvey could ever be. Between himself and Harvey lay fifteen years of service, fifteen years of devastating monotony, so many thousand miles of seafaring in which the hues of seas and cities had lost their freshness. For him there could be no more adventure, nothing new. A blind alley of a life; and he must go through to the end of it. Youth gone for ever, and who to blame? Nobody but himself. In another ten years he would be nearing fifty and ready to retire. To what? To the sea-wall at Brixham where the old captains sunned themselves like lizards and talked of dead men and broken ships, to a more absolute loneliness? For his mother could not live for ever. It gave him a bitter satisfaction, mingled with pity, to think that Harvey was innocently following in his footsteps. Yet, if he warned him, Harvey would only smile and think he had lost his senses. Each man must work out his own destiny; in any case the end was the same.

He began to open his letters, unfolding first of all the *Brixham Guardian.* Its pages had been crumpled in the post, the smeared ink made the letters run together, so that he wondered if his sight were failing. The news seemed lifeless and remote. Old Captain Brokenshire was dead. Heart failure; a piece of clock-work run down. A big ketch, the *Morning Glory,* had foundered in a gale off Fishguard with all hands. He knew the skipper, a man named Furneaux, well. That was the sea in all its grimness; he saw the harbour flag at half-mast as he had seen it many times before.

He threw the paper aside and opened his mother's letter.

The weather has been dreadful, and the east wind set up a bad bout of my bronchitis. I'm afraid there is not much news. Poor Captain Brokenshire died on Thursday in his sleep, and Elsie Tyrer is engaged to that young Bennett at the National Provincial Bank.

He read the words twice over, then laughed and swung his legs over the edge of the bunk. With what secret satisfaction had his mother written those words! Without knowing what he did he rose to his feet and stood in the middle of the cabin. The mirror above the collapsible washstand showed him his own face, dark, lined, bitter, and incredibly hard. And yet, for the first time since the Colombo Japanese had brought him the picture in the cardboard tube, he felt that he was free.

5

With something of the same sense of liberation Glanvil made his way, next morning, to the agents' office in the

Via Depretis, determined to find out exactly where he stood; for the departure of Esposito had left him doubtful whether it were on his head or his heels. The clerk in the outer office spoke no English. It was only after a long, wordless duel that he penetrated a pleasant room, lifted high above the thunder of traffic on stone setts, where Mr. Marx received him.

At a first glance the senior partner was no more prepossessing than Esposito; but, on the second, Glanvil realized that here, at least, he was dealing with a man. Mountainous, dark, saturnine, he offered Glanvil a hand that was unadorned, a blunt, spadelike hand that surprised by the firmness of its grip. His voice was husky and guttural; he bade Glanvil be seated with a lisp and a snuffle; then he tilted himself backward in a Vienna chair that seemed in danger of collapsing beneath his weight, and balanced himself, paunch upward, fingering, as he spoke, a coral charm, shaped like a horn, that occupied its summit.

"Sorry, captain," he wheezed, "that I couldn't meet you last night. You saw Esposito?"

His eyelids flickered, his lips nearly smiled. There was no need to hide from him the impression that Esposito had made. He knew and proceeded to modify it.

"Yes, you saw Esposito. Well, you can trust Esposito as completely as you would trust me. Mr. Esposito is a Neapolitan. I am a Jew. That is the difference. If you like you can call me a European; I'm quite agreeable, I hope we shall be good friends. I know enough of business to see that the best bluff is to put all the cards on the table. That's why your owners trust me, so you

can just clear your mind of any—doubts. We understand each other? Yes?"

Glanvil assented. At least he had been understood.

"Very good. Now how long will you take to discharge that cargo? Shall we say three days?"

"Say five."

"Call it four. Very good. That means that we can get you off in ten. Ten days—call it twelve. Law of averages. That means Christmas Eve. I suppose you'd like to spend Christmas ashore?"

"In England, yes. Naples is different."

"Exactly. Naples is different, and one day costs us just as much as another. Twenty-four hours. Very well, captain, you will sail on Christmas Eve. Mr. Esposito has already told you where you are going, and the nature of your cargo. Straightforward business, captain. I dare say he also suggested that you might profit by the occasion. Panda's an open market. No?"

Glanvil stiffened. "I'm a sailor, Mr. Marx."

"You're a sailor. A sailor. Quite so. Very good. Now there's one other thing of which I imagine Mr. Esposito spoke to you. Yes?"

"There was," said Glanvil ominously. The sloping bulk of Mr. Marx rolled silently forward; his elbows decended on to the desk before him, above his clasped hands he stared right into Glanvil's eyes.

"There was," he repeated. "The question of a passenger. Yes?"

"First of all," said Glanvil firmly, "I admit that I know nothing of the terms of your contract with my people in Liverpool." Marx nodded a heavy approval. "But in

any case, I take it that this is my own affair; it's a private arrangement."

Again Marx nodded solemnly. "Your own affair. Quite right, captain. It's for you to decide."

"I've decided already."

"Already. And I think I can guess your decision. But wait a moment." He leaned over the table and wagged a solemn forefinger. "I am not going to ask you a favour. You can leave that out. One does not ask favours of strangers. This, as a matter of fact, is a matter of Christian charity. You are a Christian, presumably; I am not. I am not particularly charitable either; but I am human. Let me explain." He took a deep breath and pushed a box of cigars in Glanvil's direction. "Havanas," he wheezed. "No?" He shut the box carefully and took a contorted Toscano from his own waistcoat pocket. His bright brown eyes were focused on the wall behind Glanvil's head.

"Now listen," he said, "and do not interrupt me. It is a long story. First you are to imagine a small town on the coast of England. Torquai. You know it? Very good. There is a small house and a family of two persons, mother and daughter. The father, who was a sailor like yourself, has died at sea or in some foreign port. I don't know, and it doesn't matter. He leaves them not destitute. He leaves them with a small income—very small—and that small house. How to live?"

He paused, and Glanvil nodded in appreciation. He had not wished to hear this story, but, from the first word, he had realized that Marx was very much in earnest, and so he listened.

"How to live? It is obvious. The daughter is a girl of eighteen. She finds employment, dactylographer, typewriter, in the office of an advocate. This is not enough. This Tor-quai is a *plage*. The mother lets the apartments of the house to inquilines, visitors who come to make the baths in summer. In the big hotels—who knows?—there are foreigners who are not ashamed to work while they learn the language. One of these, a *maître d'hôtel,* takes the apartment. It is a contract; he will stay for a year. He is Italian, a handsome boy, not like the others in Torquai. In that life, without colour—I know it; I have been to Newcastle—he is a hero. Romance. Is not that true? Very well. That is what the daughter thinks. It is natural. They fall in love. When the year comes to an end they cannot separate. He is going back to Italy, to Naples: *Kennst du das Land wo die Citronen blühn?* You don't know German? I was born in Frankfurt. When I lived there I did not know that the poem was all rubbish. But England——" He hunched his shoulders in a dramatic shiver.

"So these two marry. Civil marriage. The mother conveniently dies. The house is sold. The Italian takes his wife back to Naples. There he is still in a hotel making good money—who knows? In Torquai a baby has been born. The father is proud; Italians are good parents.

"Then comes the war. At first it is all right; then Italy enters, and the father is called to serve. They send him not to the Austrian front but to Somalia, Italian Somaliland, to a place called Mogadishu. What that is like I don't know. '*Brutto*' I have heard them call it.

That means ugly. All through the war he stays there. The wife is with her sister, her *cognati,* in Naples. She gets a little money from the Italian government, so much for her, so much again for the child; a trifle, but life down here is cheap. He does not write often. That is not surprising. Very few Italian ships go to Eritrea and Somalia. She waits in Naples with the *cognati,* who are kind to her for the sake of the child.

"So the war ends. The little girl is now five years old, and the mother is expecting every day that her husband will return. Suddenly the money from government stops. At first it cannot be understood, and then they find he has taken his discharge in Somalia and entered the employment of a Portuguese, Almeida was the name, who trades on that coast. Why, I can't tell you. These handsome boys get on in the world, and once you take a fancy to Africa— But that is nothing. When next they hear from him he is still in Almeida's employment, further down the coast, at Panda. You see I am getting nearer home?"

Glanvil nodded. "I think I see where the wind is," he said.

"See where the wind is. Very well. Letter, as I tell you, from Panda. No word about her joining him, and no money. *No money!*" Marx repeated the words, wagging his finger. "No money," he wheezed a third time as he let his finger fall.

"That was what made the *cognati* turn on her like animals. Neapolitans are—how shall I call it?—realist. The sister of Salvia—that is the father's name—are not ready to keep her when no more money comes. The

child is a different matter; the child is of their own blood and a plaything as well; but the mother is a foreigner, not even connected by marriage in the sight of God—that is to say, the priests; a fool of a foreigner who has been picked up and dropped by their handsome brother. So they will keep the child to play with and your country-woman can pick up her living on the street. Why not?

"That I can't answer. Perhaps it was because she still trusted her husband; perhaps she wouldn't be parted from the child; perhaps because her nature was against it. She took possession of the child and appealed to your English Consulate. What could they do for her? She wasn't English; she was Italian. If she wanted to return to England she would have to get her husband's permission to do so. It is not easy for an Italian woman to get out of Italy unless she knows the people who have to deal with her papers. If she had been the man's mistress, they told her, they might have helped her get back to Tor-quai.

"So came the surprise. She didn't want to get back to Torquai. She wanted to follow her husband, the man who was starving her, to Panda. And there, of course, they could do nothing; Panda was the other end of the world, and she a foreigner as far as they were concerned. One thing they might do officially, and they did it. They put her into touch with an English Society for the Protection or Propagation or Preservation of something or other that gave her a Christian roof and helped her, to find work of the kind that she'd done before she married Salvia.

"They offered her a post in Rome. She wouldn't take it. If Salvia were returning to Naples she must be there

to meet him. Understand she was still writing to him; she believed that the *cognati,* who now called her what they'd tried to make her, had intercepted his replies, and probably money as well. When she found work she settled down in a cheap apartment of her own, and there she got an answer to her letters from Salvia. By this time no doubt he'd heard his sister's version of what had happened. After conduct like that she couldn't expect him to support her. He was happy in Panda and meant to stay there, and if she wanted anything from him she'd better come and fetch it. Of course he was laughing, he knew she couldn't.

"That work—I've forgotten to make this clear. She got her job as dactylographist in the office of a firm of general merchants. Not very well paid. Wages are low in Italy, particularly women's wages, and her employers weren't philanthropists. Far from it. But she has a conscience in her work and was useful because the firm had dealings with England and she could handle English correspondence as well as Italian. The head of the firm knew a little about her; and had an eye for a pretty woman too.

"Very well. She sat down and worked for these people for about a year, waiting for a miracle. Not another word from Panda—and then, one day, she sits up and rubs her eyes. She has to copy a letter to a firm of shipowners in England about one of their ships that is being chartered to make a voyage to Panda, and next a manifest of cargo that is being consigned to the firm of Almeida and Diaz. All in one day! The miracle has come. No?"

The vast man swayed backward again on his chair,

his thumbs in his waistcoat pockets, his thick lips parted, his eyes smiling. It seemed as if he were actually carried away by the excitement of his narrative.

"So she comes in to the head of the firm and tells him what she wants. A passage to Panda! That takes some courage, I can tell you. Her employer isn't a philanthropist; he's not even a Christian; he's a damned fat old German Jew, captain, that has taken on Italian nationality for business reasons, and he looks like losing his best correspondence clerk. What does he say?" The big man's stomach was shaken with chuckles. "He says: 'That's the captain's affair. It's a private arrangement.' No?"

Marx threw away the stump of his half-smoked cigar and lit another, spouting blue smoke upward like a submerged whale. But for the gasping and snuffling of his respirations and the sublimated roar of traffic, the room was silent. Glanvil, who had spoken no word through this long story, felt that something was demanded of him, if only as a tribute to the part which the narrator had played in it.

"It's a queer story," he said.

"A queer story. Yes? Wait."

Marx swayed forward again and touched the button of an electric bell on his desk. The door of the outer office opened. Glanvil became aware of a quick step behind him. A woman stood at the table between Marx and himself. Marx addressed her in Italian.

"É pronia quella lettera per l'Orient Line?"

"Già, Signore. Eccola."

She handed him a typed sheet and stood waiting for

his signature while he read it through. Marx stared at the paper, but he did not read it; all his senses were strained to catch the effect that his strategy had produced on Glanvil's mind, to feel what Glanvil was feeling. And Glanvil, knowing this, fought hard against this cunning appeal to sentiment.

He saw, with critical eyes, a woman of middle height, slender, and slenderer for the black clothes that she wore. These and her own darkness gave something of a foreign elegance to her figure. And yet, when he came to look at her, he saw that she was undoubtedly of his own race. Her hair was black, but not blue-black nor coarse in texture; beneath its darkness burned a lustre of bronze, and there were threads of silver in it. Her lowered eyes were invisible, fixed humbly on the scattered papers of Marx's table; but when she raised them in answer to some muttered Italian phrase, Glanvil saw that they were of a dreamy blue. The skin of her neck was white, but not with that southern pallor of old ivory; beneath it he could see the fluttering pulsation of quick heart-beats; its surface flushed and paled like a cloud at sunset. Her hands, that were clasped before her, trembled too. Glanvil guessed that she knew who he was, and these signs of secret expectation made him ashamed of himself and his companion sitting over her in inhuman judgment like fanciers at a show. As he sat there, dumb and shameful, there gathered in his mind the pitiful emotion of the story which Marx had told him. He wanted to speak out, to put the woman at her ease, to disclaim, for his part, the criticism that she must read into the silence which Marx so deliberately prolonged. He felt an increasing distaste

for the man who had put him in this false position, the coarse, stertorous Jew who lolled there vivisecting them both; and this resentment seemed to divide them definitely into two camps; Marx on one side, himself and the woman on the other.

The position would have been more tolerable if he hadn't felt that this was exactly the effect that Marx desired; but this conviction only emphasized it. He saw Marx as a gross black spider whose sly patience had spun the threads of a pathetic story about them both till they were captive and helpless, himself in the toils of his native awkwardness, and the other because her position forbade her to speak. The whole scene had been staged with a damnable cunning. It was due to his own manhood that he should break the threads. "Be cautious, be cautious!" his reason told him.

At last Marx raised his eyes from the letter. He glanced from one to the other with an amused and wicked smile in them. Then he spoke in English.

"Very well. Yes, that is quite right." He looked at Glanvil inquiringly. Glanvil held his tongue. "Quite right. Yes. You may go."

The woman took the paper in silence and moved towards the door followed by Marx's eyes. Glanvil rose and pushed back his chair, determined to put an end to this inhuman comedy. He spoke in tones more rough than he intended.

"One moment. You are Mrs. Salvia?"

She turned; the colour mounted swiftly to her face. "Yes."

"My name is Glanvil. I am captain of the *Vega.* I understand that you want a passage to Panda."

"I do. Very much indeed."

"For yourself and your daughter?"

"Yes."

Her lips trembled, but she set them tight in a line that showed agonized expectation and all that she had suffered before. The silence was too pitiful to be borne.

"Mr. Marx has told me a little," he said; "but before we say any more about it I want you to realize that my ship is not a passenger boat. We have no women aboard. There are no conveniences or refinements about her, not even the things you'd probably expect. The food is rough and ready. My officers have no time to waste on entertaining passengers either. If you came with us you'd have to look after yourself and live to yourself. You can be certain of discomfort. That has to be understood."

"I quite understand it," she said breathlessly. "Of course I do."

He took no notice of this reply; her eagerness neutralized its value. He knew that he had been inveigled into a concession that his reason would have denied, and was determined to qualify it by an exaggerated severity, to make it clear to this palpitating woman and, above all, to Marx, that his action was neither humane nor personal.

"You must realize," he went on, "that I shall not allow your presence to make any difference to the discipline of my ship. The whole thing is entirely out of order. I can't even say, for the moment, whether I can

find you a quarter. Whatever it is you'll have to put up with it."

"Anything will do," she said quietly. "I shan't complain."

He was silent for a moment.

"In that case," he said, "I will see what I can do for you. You understand I make no promises. This is entirely a business arrangement between you and me; you have no official standing."

"I understand perfectly," she answered, then hesitated. "Before we say any more about it," she said, "there is one thing more important than anything else. I can't even accept your—kindness until I know what it will cost."

Her directness took him aback, for to answer her question implied an immediate decision and so far he had not decided anything. Nothing but the skilful play which Marx had made with his feelings had forced him to commit himself as far as he had done already; and now, once more, the agent's eyes, which watched his reactions through their narrow slits, like those of a biologist at a microscope were driving him to an act of bravado that was beyond his conscious control. He made a struggle to reassert himself.

"That's a matter that can wait," he said. "We'll talk about that later."

He turned away; the phrase had implied dismissal, but she stood her ground. He felt the struggle of words in her mind, but would not help her.

"I'm sorry," she said. "It can't wait. From my point

of view that is the most important part. Until I know that I can't be sure that it will be possible to accept your kindness. I have to make arrangements, you see," she went on eagerly. "For example, I can't fairly leave Mr. Marx here without proper notice. It's a business arrangement for me as well as for you, and if it's beyond my means, well, then——" She stopped suddenly, midway in her appeal, and Glanvil felt that if he left her stranded the sentence must finish in tears. He spoke with an unnatural harshness, conscious of an extremity of folly.

"I've told you my conditions," he said, "and you can take them or leave them. The question of money doesn't arise."

"That is generous of you," she said slowly. "I didn't intend that, and I don't think——"

He turned on her roughly, but smiling.

"Take it or leave it."

Her lips trembled. "I'll take it." She smiled back at him. "And I won't thank you."

"You'd better not," he answered gruffly.

She would have gone, but Marx, roused from his biological researches, recalled her. He grunted in Italian.

"Please make a note of this advertisement and send it at once to the *Roma,* the *Mattino* and the *Giornale della Sera.* Ready? Put it in English. 'Wanted, immediately, an experienced shorthand typist, female. Experience in English and Italian correspondence. Apply personally to Marx & Esposito: Via Depretis 109.' Is that clear? One moment; cut out 'experienced.' That

saves fifty centesimi, the price of this cigar." He snipped another in two with a pair of office scissors and lit half of it. "Very well. Now you may go."

She went. Glanvil began to pace the room restlessly as though it were the bridge of his ship. Glancing round he saw the fat man red in the face and shaken with noiseless chuckles, his eyes more slit-like than ever. He grew hot to find himself an object of amusement.

"What's the matter with you now?" he asked angrily.

Marx wagged his head, still smiling.

"The prologue of a comedy. No?"

6

Through all that week the north wind blew the plume of Vesuvius seaward from a snow-streaked cone; a dry, cold devil of a wind that swept the quays with dust and crisped the harbour water with icy ripples, driving the crew of the *Vega* below to meditate on the practical joke which their owners had played them. They sulked there in their several solitudes, hating the unfriendliness of that over-rated city, its dirt, its climate and the rapacity of its inhabitants. At meal times they met and compared notes, and so each meal became electric with potential quarrels. Hendry, and, in their turn, the other officers, could forget themselves in the business of working cargo; but Cheadle, who had not these resources, was forced to chew his grievances in idleness, growing sulkier and yellower every day, challenging disputes with Cochran, who was prepared to give as much as he got; with

Harvey, who had no grudge against anything, and even with the good-natured Hendry himself.

Over these differences Glanvil sat more remote and isolated than ever. He could do little to smooth them, for they were the natural result of a voyage too long; or just not long enough, in which a group of individuals who had agreed to sink their differences like animals in a cage, had suddenly been whipped into abandoning every polite inhibition by a disappointment against which they had no remedy. Such states of sudden irritability and intolerance were not uncommon at sea, particularly in ships as small as the *Vega*. Glanvil had known them before. He had seen them gather and dissipate like slow-moving thunder. They were born of monotony and broken by change, even by the change of one monotony for another. As soon as the *Vega* put to sea again all would be well.

All would be well. For himself the news of Elsie Tyrer's engagement to her bank clerk, snapping the last threads that a sentimental fancy had spun between him and life ashore, had left Glanvil in a sort of cold serenity. He now looked forward to the African voyage; not, indeed, with the romantic aspirations that he had been weak enough to envy in young Harvey, but with the satisfaction of knowing that for two or three months at any rate the course of his life had been definitely decided to the exclusion of desires or ambitions. This was comforting. The habit of twenty years had moulded him to a routine in which the ship's bell hammered out inflexible periods of duty and rest. The moments in which he had lately threatened to digress had brought him nothing but anx-

iety. Now, with a sensation of confidence and relief, he might withdraw himself into a life as regular in its rhythm as Cheadle's unsleeping engines.

It was not quite so easy as that. For the present he could shut himself up in his cabin with his letters and the Tauchnitz volumes he had purchased in the Via Pace; but in a few days' time he knew that he must succeed to the first legacy of his lapse: the passenger with whom Marx had so skilfully landed him.

The more he thought it over in cold blood, the more crudely unguarded his own conduct appeared. He had taken a flying jump into the pitfall that Marx had dug for him; and then, as he began to clutch at means of escape, Marx had dictated the advertisement that made his rashness irrevocable. Before he knew where he was he found himself committed to a practice that he had always condemned. Even a male passenger was a nuisance on a cargo-boat. As for women and children, the company had shown the fruits of all shipping experience in forbidding officers to take their wives on board. In the days of his apprenticeship he had realized what mischief a captain's wife could make; but the potentiality of Mr. Marx's lady was infinitely more problematical.

Frankly, he knew nothing of her but what Marx, in a few moments of theatrical eloquence had told him. He found a sinister suggestion in Marx's last words; "the prologue of a comedy," and the soundless chuckles with which their interview had ended. At what was Marx amused, unless it were the simplicity of the guileless seaman who had fallen into his trap? If it *were* a trap. In retrospect there was nothing in Marx's attitude that

did not arouse his suspicion; even his mannerisms were suspect; for instance, that trick of repeating the last phrase of a man who talked with him, just as if he were holding it up to the derision of his own acuter mind. Supposing there were not a word of truth in all Marx's story, that this woman were not, after all, an injured and devoted wife, but the mistress of some friend of his in Panda, or, at the worst, another luxury exported to satisfy the appetites of his profligate railway-men. In that case, Glanvil argued, she would hardly have been established in the agent's office as clerk in a responsible position. Also, she was indubitably English.

Casting his mind back to the interview, in which he had been fool enough to dictate instead of questioning, he tried to remember if her speech had shown any trace of the origin that Marx had attributed to her, to see if his memory could isolate a single Devonian intonation. If he had been wide awake, instead of in a state of sentimental hypnosis, he could easily have tested her on this point; but now he remembered nothing, and was forced to seek elsewhere for the corroboration that might have set his mind at ease.

Marx had spoken, in passing, of the British Consul and of some charitable society that had tried to deal with her case. If Glanvil had been more normally prudent he would have taken notes of names and addresses and made inquiries. Even now it was not too late to visit the consulate. Easier perhaps to write. For a moment her very name had slipped his memory. Before he could move a step he would have to go back to Marx's office and ask for it, to show himself, in short, feebly undetermined;

to add another weakness to the naïve precipitancy that had already set Marx chuckling; surely a poor recommendation for the master of the ship that the firm had chartered!

He abandoned this plan with a sense of futility; but that was not the worst of it. Day by day as he paced the jostling sidewalks of the Toledo and the echoing flags of the great Gallery, the face of his passenger kept him company. It began to haunt him as persistently as the orientalized version of Elsie Tyrer had haunted him before, but with a different purpose. As he walked those unreal pavements he was always expecting, desiring to see her. Time after time he was tricked into imagining that the thing had happened, that a single question and answer: "Is it true? Yes, it is true," would lay the persistent ghost; and then he would see the red lips of some Neapolitan half-smiling at him out of a face pallid and mat, and he would pass on with all the blood of his body beating in his head, returning to the ship to read in his bunk, listening for the whine of Cheadle's querulous voice, or the rapid bursts of dialect in which Esposito, who now strutted like a bantam on the deck of the *Vega,* cursed and encouraged the Italian stevedores.

It was in these moments of isolation that the image of Marx's typist most tormented him, gathering cloudily in background of his thoughts and then suddenly taking a phantasmal shape. Then he would throw away his book, cursing her and Marx and himself together. These visions were the result of his own lack of determination in dealing with the matter. It was not like him to let

things slide; and yet, knowing what a fool he had shown himself, he shrank from making a confession of his folly.

The days slipped by. He saw that he could not avoid the subject much longer. An opportunity offered itself. Rennels, the chief steward, brought him the accounts of his purchases in Naples. A sedentary Londoner, his dark hair plastered into a cowl of black satin, he stood behind Glanvil, who sat writing at his desk, and breathed over his shoulder an odour of stale beer, like the morning atmosphere of a pothouse. Glanvil had always felt for him the contempt with which a seaman regards the parasites of his calling; he hated the man's slovenliness of dress and speech and knew that his pear-shaped paunch had fattened on perquisites. He guessed that the sheet of accounts which lay before him ready for signature was cooked from end to end, the final expression of the steward's intercourse with effusive and unsavoury compradors, known only by their Christian names, who slunk up and down the gangways whenever the ship touched port. This was the man to whom he must entrust the arrangements for his passenger's reception, and as he began to speak of it he felt as if he were asking him the favour of covering something ignoble and unclean rather than issuing a legitimate command.

"I want you," he said, "to put the empty cabin on the starboard side ready. We are taking on two passengers for Panda. See that everything is clean and shipshape. You understand?"

"Certainly, sir. I wish you had let me know before, sir."

"Why?"

"Time's getting short, sir, the chief officer tells me. I shall have to make extra provision. I suppose they will take their meals in the saloon, sir?"

This question had not engaged him: the first difficulty.

"No, no. They'll eat in their own cabin."

"That adds considerably to the steward's work, sir."

"So much the better. Ah Qui will look after them."

"Very good, sir. I suppose their messing will go through the ship's account?"

"No; you'll keep it separate. It's my private affair."

"Quite so, sir. I think you said two? There's only one bunk in number six. I thought I'd better mention it."

"There's a locker, isn't there?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Well, that will do." Glanvil spoke shortly. "Anything else?"

"Not that I know of, sir."

"Very well."

He went, and Glanvil straightway began to ask himself what curious inhibition had prevented him from disclosing the sex of one passenger and the age of the other. He couldn't answer; but he knew that, once again, he had been guilty of the kind of tactical error that seemed to pursue him all through this miserable transaction. In another day or two the woman and her child would arrive; by that time the news that passengers were expected would have percolated the whole ship, and then the prurient mind of Rennels would find an answer to the question that would set his ship's company sniggering be-

hind his back. There was no reason, he told himself, why he should give the chief steward this tit-bit to play with; it would be politic, on the other hand, to admit Hendry or Cheadle to his confidence. Politic be damned! He was master of the *Vega* and could afford to do what he chose without explaining himself; he had said all that was necessary.

That evening the chief steward divulged his news to the small cabin aft, where the second and third engineers messed comfortably by themselves. From them it passed to Cheadle, who, if he could find nothing to grumble about himself, was eager to triumph over any cause of annoyance to others. Remembering the trouble that the returning emigrants had already given to Hendry, he waylaid the chief officer as he entered the alley-way that led to the saloon, tired and dusty from loading cargo.

"Heard the news?" he said. "Another lot of passengers."

"Passengers?" Hendry blurted, going red. "What do you mean? The old man's said nothing to me about any passengers."

Cheadle chuckled. "You'd better ask him, then."

They found Glanvil already established at the head of the table. He greeted Hendry and asked him how the cargo was getting on.

"Middling well, sir. I heard we're in for another batch of passengers."

"Who told you that, Mr. Hendry?"

For a moment silence. Then Cheadle came falteringly to the rescue.

"The chief steward was making arrangements."

Glanvil looked from one to the other with his contained, forbidding smile.

"You needn't be frightened, Mr. Hendry. They won't come into your province."

Not another word. Once more Glanvil had postponed the moment of admission. He knew it; he was annoyed with his secretiveness, and the rest of the meal dragged itself out in a silence which was felt so deeply that when he retired the others began to chatter like schoolboys suddenly left to themselves.

"It's all very well to talk about the officers of a ship being loyal and that," said Cheadle, "but when men like you and me that are pretty near old enough to be his father get put in our places the same as if we were kids, it's getting a bit thick." Hendry, drugged with fresh air and food, nodded a lazy assent and Cheadle warmed to his subject. "I tell you it's a bit thick," he repeated. "It's not good enough. In this company you get the same treatment all along the line. I'm sick of them and their blasted ship. From the way they go poking into it you'd think that I was in the habit of eating their coal. Every time I've been home for the last four voyages I've given it straight to the engineer superintendent. I've told him that you can't expect economical running with a lot of old junk like these engines. 'Give us a refit, sir, and then we'll talk about coal.' That's what I've told him straight. D'you think they'll listen? Not they! One of these days we shall break down, and then the salvage'll make them squeal. It's bad enough for me, although a chief engineer's got a certain standing; but when it comes

to the way you chief officers are treated, I don't know how you stick it. One thing I know, though, and that is if one of my boys ever suggested to me that he wanted to go to sea, I could tell him enough about the way this ship is run to scare the life out of him. Eh?"

Hendry nodded blandly.

"Well, well," he said, "the sooner this cargo's finished with the sooner I shall get a moment's peace. With a bit of luck we shall clear to-morrow night. So long!"

He put on his cap and rolled into the alley-way, leaving Cheadle to expend his eloquence on the cropped head of Cochran, who sat opposite him, munching dried figs in silence.

Apart from the disappointment of missing Christmas at home, Hendry had nothing to grumble about. Between him and Glanvil there was no question of offended dignity. Theirs was a business relationship. The master of a ship had more right than most men to indulge his own moods. All that Glanvil demanded of him was that he should stick to his job; if this were run smoothly and efficiently he could count on freedom from interference. For the present he was well pleased with the way in which things were going, thanks, mainly, to the zeal of Esposito.

In Naples there is nothing that *camorra* cannot accomplish. Before the flicker of Esposito's pointed finger-nail, the sacks of copra, that had cumbered the *Vega's* hold and permeated her atmosphere with a hot odour of tropic beaches, had vanished, and in their places an irregular pyramid of clean white boxes rose upon the quay. Hendry, who had looked forward to a week of pandemonium and misunderstanding, stood gaping at the efficiency

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which the semaphore gestures of this perfumed Neapolitan commanded. From sunrise to sunset the rattle of the *Vega's* winches never ceased; blue-black against the stars her blunt derricks swung and tilted, dredging from the outer darkness rope-nets full of gleaming boxes that crackled like eggshells and bled vermouth if they only grazed the hatchway in their furious descent toward the inner darkness of the hold.

They worked, these stevedores, in relays with a sort of wild abandonment too hot to last; when one had spent himself and thrown himself down, exhausted and sweating, in the shadow, another, equally sanguine, would leap into his place, shedding his rags to cover the man he had succeeded; scrambling down the rope ladder to the hold, grappling the ropes that guided the bulging net of cargo which swung above their heads and threatened to crush them with its bulk. By night and day they sprawled over the *Vega's* deck, making it their home, eating, sleeping, quarrelling, working, gambling, singing. By noon on the eighth day, earlier by four than Marx had anticipated, the carpenter had begun to knock in the battens of the last hatch-cover, and Esposito's *tour de force* was done.

On that day Marx himself condescended to lunch on board the *Vega*. It was the first time that Glanvil had seen him since that interview of which he carried such humiliating memories. It surprised him to find that Marx in the flesh was far less sinister than the Marx of his imagination. In his own office Marx had never risen to his feet, and, as a consequence, Glanvil had not realized that his stature was insignificant compared with the bulk of his shoulders. His legs were so short, in fact, that,

once separated from his chair, he became a comic figure, mincing along the quay like a caricature come to life with a gay sprig of mimosa in his buttonhole.

At luncheon Marx ate next to nothing and seldom spoke. Yet, within a few moments he had shown himself as remarkable as ever. He sat there like a musician whose ear could detect the finest differences of vibration in his chosen instrument, so deft, so human, that the discordances which had lately jarred the whole ship's company vanished beneath his persuasion. He played upon them like a master, until it seemed as if Cochran and Cheadle had lived harmoniously for years, as if this voyage to Panda were no longer an injury but the jolliest adventure in the world.

Glanvil sat beside him and marvelled at this unapproachable virtuosity. He heard the tough reserve of Cochran broken by a schoolboy's guffaw; he saw Cheadle's grudging face grow mild and homely, remembering his chrysanthemums, and Hendry, smoothed by flattery, purring like a great red cat.

It shamed him to think that he had accepted each of them at a value which the surer touch of Marx now showed to be superficial, and suddenly he began to wonder whether he, too, shared in the process of clarification and stood revealed to them in a new and truer light, whether, beneath their usual deference, they were penetrating to his guarded self. Certainly neither Cochran nor Cheadle had ever done so before; Hendry, perhaps. Such revelations were uncomfortable. He remembered the feeling of nakedness with which he had retired from his attempt to make contact with Harvey; and as this passed with a

shiver through his mind, Harvey himself stood in the doorway of the saloon.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said. "May I speak to you, just one moment?"

"Certainly. What is it?"

"The quartermaster just called me to the gangway, sir. There's a woman with a child. She gives the name of Salvia, but I think she must be English."

"Yes?"

"The trouble is, sir, that she says she's booked a passage with us to Panda. I told her that there must be some mistake. Perhaps Mr. Marx will know if there's any other ship in the harbour that's bound there."

Marx stared at him with narrowed eyes, but said nothing. There was a sensation in the air as though all the occupants of the saloon were holding their breath. The transformations that Marx had worked faded away. Glanvil saw himself surrounded by the old, secret figures. He became himself again. He spoke, and was aware of an audience that listened critically.

"No, Mr. Harvey, it's all right. Mr. Marx has arranged this lady's passage. Please tell the chief steward to attend to them. He knows all about it."

"Very good, sir," the bewildered Harvey replied, vanishing.

"A glass of port, Mr. Marx?" Glanvil asked politely.

Mr. Marx smiled. "Of port? Yes." He lifted his glass and squinted past it into Glanvil's eyes. "Good luck," he said, "*bon voyage . . . buon viaggio!*"

An hour later the *Vega* left Naples, her bows lifting and plunging over a long swell that swept landward from the

Bocca Piccola. On the horizon, like smoke of a hostile army in bivouac, the grey wall of a sleeping *scirocco* crouched in wait for her.

By sunset they had lost the land and plunged into dank and windy darkness. All through that evening Glanvil kept the bridge. He took a hasty dinner in his own cabin, and when midnight came, stormy and starless, he was still on deck. This self-imposed duty suited his mood; for though in harbour he had hated the sea and wished that he had done with it, he returned to it with zest, as to an element natural and reassuring, the only one in contact with which he was really himself. Once at sea on the bridge of the *Vega* the gloom and indecision that had vexed him in Naples were blown away. Now he had better things to think of than Mrs. Salvia—Helen Salvia, stewardess, as the papers which Marx had delivered to him on sailing described her. By virtue of this description she had ceased to be an intruder with romantic possibilities; she had taken her place on the articles and the bills of lading; their relation was now officially defined and therefore unembarrassing.

CHAPTER II

I

In the empty cabin on the starboard side which Glanvil had allotted to her, Helen Salvia lay with Gina in her arms. The swell which lifted the *Vega,* held her with racing screw, then left her to subside with a shudder into the sickening deeps, made Mrs. Salvia's head and stomach swim uneasily, but she dared not move for fear of waking the child, whose sleep these gigantic heavings and sinkings seemed not to disturb. The little girl had clutched the front of her mother's nightdress in one olive fist; her smooth brow seemed solemnly set above the too-heavy lashes with which her eyelids were fringed. She slept heavily; her face was flushed; her body burned against the side of her mother; it burned her and she could not move. She could only lie there with the noise of the sea streaming through her brain, watching, with a nauseated fascination, a brass lamp on swivelled bearings that balanced itself with ludicrous deliberation against the *Vega's* drunken staggers, and listening to the tinkle of medicine bottles which, in a moment of foolish confidence, she had placed upon the shelf above the wash-hand stand. She knew that she could neither move nor sleep, and so she lay staring into the narrow space, half illuminated by the light of the next cabin which showed through

the panel of frosted glass in the top of the bulkhead, to which a sudden caprice of fate had committed her for the next three weeks.

This was the second violent uprooting that her life had suffered. Something in her cramped attitude, in the narrowness of the cabin, in the sickening heat, reminded her of the first of these experiences. Then, as now, life, with one staggering leap, had cast her with her baby in her arms into another narrow chamber with one light burning: a crowded second-class compartment of the Italian State Railways, boring southward through darkness at sixty miles an hour.

She remembered that other vigil as vividly as if it had been yesterday. She saw herself, travel-pale, wedged into her corner of the carriage by a fat Genovese woman who lay propped against her shoulder and added a monstrous bodily heat to the smell of steam, snoring, as she lay, beneath a dirty silk handkerchief. Then, too, she had been miserably afraid to move; and even if she had moved there would have been no room for her, since Lorenzo—Laurence as she called him—sprawled along the whole length of the opposite side, a black velours hat pulled down over his handsome eyes. She shrank into her corner, frightened and a little hurt that Laurence gave no thought to her; for the first time in their married life she felt afraid of him.

That day, at noon, they had stood wedged in the crowd before the customs at Modane, and when their passports had been scrutinized and their luggage rifled by dirty hands, they had passed out, dazed, into the thin Alpine air. It had seemed to her that one ordeal was over; in

reality another had begun; for no sooner had her husband stepped on to Italian soil than she knew that he had been subtly changed. It seemed as if the flood of Italian speech, the strange scents of Italy, with which she was now so familiar that she didn't even notice them, had swept him away from her, dissolving the unnatural ties that bound them; he had been assimilated like a globule of mercury into the fluid mass of a greater globe with which it comes in contact. As they gobbled down strange food in the buffet she realized that she and her child were made of different metal. He drank much of a harsh mountain wine; his gestures and speech became rapid and flamboyant. On the platform he left them to drag behind him; his eyes never sought for hers. She was lonely.

She tried to persuade herself that the change was natural. In England Laurence had been a shy, quiet foreigner, almost humbly formal in his manners; in Italy this weight of strangeness had been lifted from him, and she, in her turn, was forced to bear it. She remembered that in the early days of their courtship it was just this foreign shyness that had touched her; she had known that among the people whom he met in Torquay there were few with whom he could speak his own tongue, and so she had tried to atone with sympathy for her lack of understanding, inviting his confidence, protecting him as if he were a child, explaining, with a patience that never failed, the things that he couldn't understand. Now that the positions were reversed would he do the same for her? She wondered and feared. Even as he lay there sleeping, his lips set in their fine and rather scornful curve, he seemed

to have gained a sort of brutal confidence that had been foreign to him and made her tremble. Against the roar of the train she searched her philosophy for remedies against this calamity; but she could find none. All she could do for comfort was to clutch her baby tighter to her breast.

When daylight came the others still slept. She saw on her left the ochre-coloured fields of the Campagna rolling to the base of low hills tufted with olives: a mean land, scattered with scanty stacks of fodder, where dun-coloured oxen lurched and strained at the plough. Through a crevice at the bottom of her shutter she saw a new sea, the Mediterranean, of which he had told her, breaking languidly on grey beaches, flaked with cold, white sails. There was no blue in that sea, no green in the land. When Laurence woke he had smiled at her lazily. She saw that it was his old smile, and her heart lightened.

He took the baby from her while she staggered along the rocking corridor to wash herself in a waterless lavatory full of appalling smells. When she returned she found him burning with excitement, chattering furiously to the fat Genovese, kissing the frightened Gina with a sort of animal violence that made her want to take the child away from him. When she held out her arms he gave her again that changeling look, dark, cruel, inscrutably foreign. She sat helpless while he went on talking to his fellow-countrywoman, so quickly that the babyish Italian that he had taught her was useless. He and the woman and that black-eyed baby were on one side, herself on the other. A white jealousy took her by the throat and

almost forced her to cry out. At last she knew why he had brought her to Italy; it was for the sake of Gina, that piece of his own flesh which he had grafted on her body like a parasite, that flower in his own dark image that was still unable to live without her. Otherwise he had no more need of her.

And yet she loved him. Even as she saw him now, unshaven and travel-soiled, like any shabby foreigner of Soho, she could not forget his white, splendid teeth, his eyes that were like dark, clear amber, daring yet soft as a woman's. In that moment she had become jealous of her own child, and the monstrous inhumanity of this feeling brought with it a revulsion of pity and tenderness that made her wonder if she were going mad. Eight bells.

The pane of frosted glass brightened, and at the same moment her vision of an old unhappiness was broken by a snatch of ragtime hummed by the engineer in the next cabin who had just come off duty. She closed her eyes, for any light hurt them; she thought no more of that tragic journey; yet, in another moment, her mind had hurried her back to Naples, to the precipitous street, festooned with washing, in which she had learned resignation. For a year and more she had persuaded herself that she loved Laurence no longer, and solaced her heart with the child; but when the war came, and Laurence, like a dark panther in his grey-green uniform, had left her, she had been humbly glad to piece together the fragments of that broken passion, she had even felt grateful that Gina was so like him. He was her first love: nothing could alter that. In separation she forgot her disillusion-

ment, and built for herself a new illusion, looking eagerly for his return, and, when this hope vanished, scheming desperately to join him.

It seemed incredible that her scheme should have succeeded, that this plunging ship was actually carrying her toward the hour for which she had lived. This moment, she told herself, should be one of ecstasy; yet, beneath her exultation, she was afraid, knowing on what slender foundations the hopes that had sustained her through the last five years were laid, half-regretting the security of Marx's office which she had abandoned for this uncertain quest.

Looking backward, it seemed to her that she had never properly appreciated the kindness of Marx. It was Marx who had made this new adventure possible; and yet she had barely thanked him. No doubt he would understand. Perhaps, in the back of his mind, the old man realized what lay in wait for her; perhaps he had only released her in the cynical certainty that bitter experience would send her back to him. She abandoned every attempt to understand his motives, and in another moment his place in her thoughts was filled by the figure of her second benefactor, Glanvil.

Whatever Marx had achieved, her whole fate really rested in the hands of this austere and sombre sailor whom she had seen for no more than ten minutes in Marx's office. She realized the exceptional nature of his favour in accepting herself and Gina as passengers on his ship; and this set her wondering what had prompted him to do so. She could not guess how much of her story Marx had told him. Perhaps she would never know;

for in the picture that she had made for herself he seemed an unapproachable creature. It was curious that in spite of this dispassionate remoteness she had regarded him from the first with a complete confidence which she could not explain, feeling that no word that she said to him would be misinterpreted or judged by standards different from her own.

Of course he was English; that, perhaps, was the explanation of her confidence and of his kindness. Technically and spiritually she was now on English soil, among men from whom a standard of conduct might be expected toward women, and this was the most reassuring aspect of her new adventure. These countrymen of hers were so different from the Neapolitans among whom she had passed the last six years. In a Neapolitan the wearing of a uniform began a swaggering arrogance, so different from the bearing of the fair-haired boy who had met her on the gangway and tried to turn her away. She had nearly laughed for joy and relief as she looked into his blue eyes and heard, in his speech, the hint of a West-country burr. "Mr. Harvey," the quartermaster had called him. Harvey sounded like a Devonshire name. Was it possible?

She smiled to herself, lying with closed eyes, as the name brought back into her mind the picture of a Brixham fish-hawker whose pony used to amble over to Torquay twice a week with its loads of dabs and whiting. His name was Harvey too. She remembered how he used to stump up to the door in his blue jersey. Her mother had always complained that he gave short weight; and yet

how precious was the memory in its power to recall that smooth, uncomplicated life!

Once more she heard the clang of the ship's bell: *one, two—three, four,* from the bridge, and then an echo from the fo'c'sle head. Out of the turmoil of the night there floated a wind-driven cry: "All's well, and all lamps burning!" The beaten bell recalled her to an actuality that before had seemed less vivid than her dreams; in the watchman's cry there was something apposite if not prophetic. Trembling with an emotion that must, somehow, be shared, she gathered Gina in her arms and kissed the child's warm lips. And then she began to cry quietly to herself.

2

However anxious Glanvil may have been to dismiss the presence of Mrs. Salvia from his thoughts, he soon discovered that this was impossible. All through her first night out of port the *Vega* had continued her drunken progress. Next morning they sat down to breakfast with "fiddles" on the table, and the presence of these sinister machines suggested to Hendry the opening for which he and the other officers had been waiting. Toward the end of the meal, when Cochran had left the saloon to relieve the third officer, he began.

"With all this light cargo from Naples she's inclined to jump about a bit this morning. I wonder how our young lady is standing it."

Glanvil made no reply. He guessed by Hendry's deli-

cate approach that the matter had been discussed overnight; no doubt the others had agreed on the impropriety of his own conduct. He would give them no encouragement. But none was needed.

"Poor soul," said Cheadle dreamily. "Well, there's one good thing, and that is that children as a rule don't feel the motion of the sea the same as grown-ups. How old did you say the little girl was, sir?"

"Don't ask me," Glanvil grunted. "I've not seen her."

"I should judge her about six or seven, sir," said Harvey, who had entered and sat down to eat. "A jolly-looking kid: dark eyes and hair: proper Italian I should call her."

"Italian? Of course she's Italian," Cheadle replied. "Salvia. That's an Italian name if ever there was one."

"But the mother's English all right," said Harvey.

"No doubt you've taken stock of her," said Cheadle grudgingly. "Well, it's a rum go, anyway. I was wondering out of interest, like, whether you could tell us anything of the circumstances, sir."

"Not much," said Glanvil. "She was sent to me by Mr. Marx. It appears that her husband is in the employment of the people to whom we're consigned at Panda: Almeida's the name. She's been trying to join him for some time, and this was the first ship she had any opportunity of getting. Mr. Marx asked for her passage as a favour and I consented. I made it quite clear that we weren't going to put ourselves out for her."

"I don't see what else you could have done, sir," said Hendry encouragingly. "Of course, when a man's married, like myself and the chief, it makes him think of his own wife under similar circumstances. Isn't that so?"

"Yes; it's a queer position and that's a fact," said Cheadle, "one woman among a shipful of men like us. The chief officer and myself, being married men, can understand. I only hope the poor thing'll be comfortable."

"The chief steward has orders to make her comfortable, Mr. Cheadle," said Glanvil.

"Quite so, sir, quite so. But if you were in our position and had a wife of your own and children like my three lads, you'd feel that you had a sort of human duty to look after her like." Glanvil watched Cheadle's yellow fingers crumbling a piece of bread as he spoke. In Cheadle's hesitant speech he detected a sort of hungry nervousness that threw its superficial benevolence into the background and forced him into a sudden reaction.

"Not too human, please, Mr. Cheadle."

The words were not out of his mouth before he was sorry for them. He saw an unusual flush rising beneath Cheadle's sallow skin, saw Harvey's eyes quickly downcast, and Hendry swallowing greedily to cover his embarrassment. This insult, for it was nothing less, was not merely the result of the irritation that Cheadle had inflicted on a raw spot that his own awkwardness had made ridiculously sensitive: it represented the accumulated aversion which he felt from everything that Cheadle was or thought: and no sooner had he spoken than he realized that his motive must inevitably be misunderstood. The words he had spoken would be interpreted as the last link in a chain of damning evidence: they would give a sinister colour to the secretiveness that he had always shown on the subject of Mrs. Salvia, convincing everybody

that his silence had indicated an excess rather than a lack of interest, and that this interest was personal. He pulled himself up sharply and, flushed as Cheadle, made a hurried apology.

"I'm sorry, chief," he said. "You didn't see that I was joking."

"Joking? Well, in that case, sir——" Cheadle began, and then was silent.

"What the chief means, sir," Hendry interposed, so hurriedly that he had not time to empty his mouth, "is that we're in honour bound, so to speak, to make this lady's passage as comfortable as it may be. Of course, it goes without saying that anything——" he hesitated, "—anything of *that* kind mustn't arise. That's understood. It's our business to put her and her child into the hands of her husband. We don't know anything about the circumstances; but that doesn't alter the fact that we're put, so to speak, on our honour, if you don't mind my saying so, sir. . . ."

In this appeal to Glanvil the chief officer, already hard driven, had zigzagged like a hare to escape the jaws of confusion; but Glanvil would not save him and he was lost.

"For the sake of our loved ones," he added, with inconsequent triumph, and then subsided into his table napkin, his neck flushed, his blue eyes brimming with emotion.

Cheadle solemnly nodded approval of the sentiment. The memory of his brush with Glanvil made him pontifical.

"That, I should think, is understood," he said darkly. "We're all here except the second officer, but no doubt the

mate will have a word with him, and I shall certainly talk to the engineers too. The interest we're bound to take in this Mrs. Salvia is the interest of family men in a female in distress. It should be regarded in the spirit in which it's offered, and if anyone of us presumes to take a liberty . . ." he threw a jealous glance at the unconscious Harvey and continued in accents with which the chapel at Newton-in-Makerfield was familiar . . . "I should consider it my duty to put a stop to it."

Without a word Glanvil rose from his chair and left them to decide the destiny of his passenger for themselves. His departure was followed by a silence beneath which the suppressed rage of Cheadle could almost be heard simmering. Hendry, puzzled and anxious for peace, gave a deep sigh. He watched Cheadle's long nose, set in a pallor of discoloured parchment, feeling that some word must be said to resolve the unnatural suspense; but his brain could produce nothing more than, "Well, well, well," a phrase that was as effective as any other in releasing the hair-trigger on which the detonation of Cheadle's humour depended. As he heard it, the chief trembled and exploded.

"You may well say that, Hendry," he began in a cracked voice. "I tell you frankly that I've finished. I've finished, I say. This very morning I shall write to the owners. Mr. Richard is a good friend of mine—we were shipmates on the *Altair;* I don't suppose Captain Glanvil knows *that*—and I shall tell them exactly what old and faithful servants of the company have to put up with on this ship. They can take it or leave it. A man who owns property like I do has the courage to speak out.

Not too human! The calculated insolence, to a man of my age."

"You'll think better of it, chief," Hendry softly persuaded. "The old man said he was joking."

"Joking? Did you ever hear him make a joke before?" Cheadle demanded. "He'd better choose his jokes and the folk he makes them to. *Not too human.* . . . Mr. Hendry, if there's one man needs watching aboard this ship, you can take it from me and my knowledge of human nature, it's the master." Cheadle waved a bony forefinger. "Ay, and who knows what this woman is that he's got on board? Who knows that she isn't . . . I won't soil my tongue with the word . . . but what I ask you is this: why did he keep it dark from you and me and the chief steward up to the very last moment, when no inquiries could be made? That's the question I'd ask you, and that's the question the owners ought to ask. Furtive, that's what he is, and what makes him furtive if it isn't a guilty conscience? One more thing I tell you: as an elderly man and as a family man I intend to keep my eyes open. Say no more about it."

He rose, lanky, high-shouldered, pale. The long hair at the nape of his neck straggled over a scurfy collar. He walked out into the alley-way with clenched fists. Hendry exchanged a piteous glance with Harvey.

"Well, well, well," he said.

Harvey smiled.

"The old man's in a funny mood. He was like that before we got to Naples. But what the chief suggested about this Mrs. Salvia is all my eye. A chap can spot that sort in two seconds. The chief's talking through

his hat; he's never seen her; but I have, and you can take it from me, Mr. Hendry, that she's all right."

Hendry slowly nodded his puzzled head.

3

At four bells Glanvil, accompanied by Hendry and Cheadle, set out on his daily inspection of the ship. The wind had fallen at dawn, but a black and glassy swell still ran from the southward and the air was moist and chill. Ever since daybreak the bo's'n had kept the watch on deck busy with swabs and holystone and sluicing sea-water. Already the *Vega* was shaking from her decks the degradation of harbours and emerging as the clean sea-creature that she was, stripped, scoured and shining. Glanvil scrutinized this rite of lustration proudly, not only because the ship was his first command and her cleanliness an index of his own efficiency, but because, even if she were old, the *Vega* was a lady, and her beauty was dear to him. He had reason to be proud of her. Built in the early 'nineties for the China tea trade by the old White-funnel Line, her clipper bows suggested a speed at which Cheadle's decrepit engines could no longer drive her; her raked masts and funnels gave her an aristocratic air; her decks were of teak, like those of a yacht.

They passed in procession down the companion of the well-decked for'ard, and so to the fo'c'sle, where the Chinese crew were housed in a narrow triangle divided lengthwise into two campartments, deck hands to starboard, firemen to port, with a steaming galley between.

They entered. A tall, elegant figure in black sateen

pyjamas, the "Number One" whose corruptions represented the discipline of the Chinese crew, stood watching them, his yellow fingers clasped before him. Within the space of a step they had travelled four thousand miles, from the Tyrrhenian to the China Sea. Here, like mummies on the rock-shelves of a catacomb, the firemen of the middle watch prolonged their sleep in an air that seemed to have been embarked at Singapore and kept inviolate ever since; a complex air of camphor-wood, soy, and another warm stale smell, disguised by the aroma of joss sticks that still smouldered in the lid of a biscuit-tin before a plaster image in a red wooden box. Hendry peered into the darkness, sniffing.

"Opium again, sir," he said. Cheadle grunted in confirmation.

Glanvil did not answer him. In the darkness he became aware of many listeners though none of the sleepers stirred. Out of the apex of the triangle he saw one pair of eyes, two points of light reflected as from black polished stone, inhuman, like the eyes of a snake. He knew that he was expected to curse the life out of "Number One." He couldn't do it; for in the trance into which those gleaming pin-points and the tense silence had thrown him, opium meant nothing.

He was thinking of Cheadle who stood behind him at Hendry's elbow, elderly and dyspeptic. There was nothing about Cheadle that he did not dislike, from his flat north country speech to his chapel morality; but now he saw him as a man who had lost the zest of youth, if ever he had known it, and stood bewildered on the downward slope, treading cautiously, anxious for the future of chil-

dren whose destinies he could never hope to follow, an old man, made querulous and jealous by the failure that he was too preoccupied to realize. And this creature, Glanvil, in the arrogance of his youth and his command, had insulted. How to make amends without diminishing the dignity of his position? He saw the flat face of "Number One" awaiting the storm that would not break.

"We'll go aft now, Mr. Hendry," he said.

He went stalking out through the blown steam of the galley. In front of them waddled an emaciated goose that the cook had purchased in Singapore. It lifted its bedraggled wings and took refuge with a melancholy hiss between the legs of one of the deck-hands who sat on the hatch-cover having his head shaved. Operator and victim smiled as he passed.

"It's no good worrying about one's dignity," Glanvil thought. "If I were a man of Cheadle's age and had been treated like that——" He heard Cheadle's step behind him; he knew how Cheadle walked with his feet turned out beneath his bagged trousers. Hendry was speaking:

"You can say what you like about opium. They can't get on without it. Give me a Chinese crew every time. Three of the crew that went ashore at Naples came aboard properly poisoned with Italian brandy. That's your white man for you!"

And after all, Glanvil thought, the attack had been unjustified. The phrase that had evoked it had been innocent enough: "a human duty to look after her like." That was a natural and decent thing to say. Why, in Heaven's name, should a thing like that have made him

see red? Because a woman had introduced into their cloistral sea-life the irritant virus of her sex, a yeast to brew subconscious rivalries and jealousies. He had only set eyes on this woman once; she had scarcely spoken to him; his own words to her had been official and severe; as for Cheadle, he had never seen her. Cheadle was a married man and old enough to be his father; and yet, at Cheadle's challenge, he had answered like any cock upon a dunghill. Inexplicable but damnable.

They entered a long alley-way, dark and paved with iron on which a wet grit of coal-dust rasped beneath their feet. An iron door clanged behind them. They passed a company of shadows, firemen of the first watch, yellow and bony with sweat rags round their necks, who crouched near to the gurgling, slapping hawse-pipes in search of warmth.

"What are you doing here? No can. Get along top-side," Cheadle growled. Strange devils. On, past the bulkheads of the stokehold, breathing dry heat. From below Glanvil heard a high, tuneless song; above, ashes rattled in the fiddley. On, past the clanking echoes of the sunken engines and their vast steamy sighing. A draught of air that was like cold water; then the sodden after well-deck and the cheesy-smelling quarters of the white men in the stern where the steering gear grated and the racing screw thundered beneath them. Glanvil turned and saw Cheadle gazing at him with a mute resentment. The man was pitiable. To escape from this gaze he led the way on to the poop, cumbered by crates full of fowls that the chief steward had bought in Naples. They huddled together with feathers ruffled, sick and terrified. Be-

yond the taffrail a wake of opaque and muddled green flawed the green glassiness of the Tyrrhenian, and the taut rope of the patent log revolved as though it were spinning an endless thread of miles behind them. The instrument gave a metallic ping, and Glanvil glanced at its dial.

"Not so bad," he muttered. "We shall make Stromboli by three." The moment had come. "Mr. Hendry."

"Yes, sir?"

"Do you know how Mrs. Salvia is this morning?"

"No, sir. I met the steward taking in her breakfast."

Out of the corner of his eye Glanvil saw Cheadle looking down his long nose.

"Give her my compliments," he said, "and tell her that I'm coming for'ard to see that she's comfortable. About that opium; by the look of 'Number One's' eyes I'm inclined to think that he's the culprit. He's pretty good at his job."

"First rate, sir. I've no complaints."

"Leave it at that, then. Very good."

Hendry saluted and blundered down the companion. Glanvil turned to the chief engineer.

"Mr. Cheadle, I don't know if I made myself clear this morning. I had no right to speak to you as I did before the other officers, and I'm sorry that I did so."

Cheadle's eyes blinked. His face flushed slightly in the consciousness of dignity reinstated.

"Very good, sir. We'll say no more about it."

Glanvil stood for a moment in silence, unable to cover his retreat.

"I shall be glad if you'll measure the bunkers and let

me know how we stand. I should think five hundred at Port Said will do us."

"I'll send along the figure at once, sir," Cheadle replied.

It was over. Glanvil climbed thoughtfully down the ladder to the well-deck. Over? It had scarcely begun. On the strip of deck abaft the engine-room entrance on which Cheadle took his splay-footed constitutionals, the mate intercepted him: "The lady is up and ready to see you, sir."

He went for'ard. There was no reason why this duty should perturb him more than any other in the ship's routine. A couple of hours ago he had allowed his sensitiveness to make a fool of him with Cheadle; that was enough for one day. No doubt she would expect him to be chivalrous, polite, like a sailor in a romance. These qualities were not in him, and he had no intention of affecting the least shade of sentiment that he didn't feel.

Ah Qui was on his hands and knees swabbing out the alley-way. He flattened himself against the bulkhead as Glanvil passed and knocked heavily on the cabin door. A voice bade him enter, and he opened it.

The first sight of her gave him a shock of surprise; she seemed so different from the imperfectly remembered image of Marx's office. He had pictured her as a grave, secret, slow-spoken creature, her beauty clean-cut and hard with the subdued brilliance of a dark gem; he saw, instead, a fragile figure of grey and the face of a young girl, pale and serious, with only eyes that he remembered. He found her so different from what he had imagined that his attitude towards her which had been steeled in this misconception became incongruous. This aspect of youth

and modesty disarmed him. He could do nothing but wonder at her change or his mistake as he saw her crouched upon the cushioned locker, her arms protecting the child who clasped her neck and nestled to her shoulder, her serious eyes regarding him beneath a brow from which her black hair was gathered smoothly in a manner that made her seem small, virginal, forlorn. She looked so unapproachable, so unprovocative, so pitiful, that he felt more guilty than ever of the injustice with which he had dropped on the chief. He owed an apology to her no less than to Cheadle. This would never do.

"Good morning, Mrs. Salvia." He spoke in a voice that was intentionally harsh. "I hope you are comfortable. I should have seen you before; but I suppose you realize I have responsibilities."

"Quite comfortable, thank you," she replied. She smiled faintly. "Of course, you are not responsible for the sea's behaviour."

He insisted on being serious; he hadn't come there to exchange banter.

"No," he said, "we can't help that. With any luck we shall be out of it this evening. The glass is steady and the wind has fallen."

"Yes, yes," she said, amused at his seriousness. "I'm not complaining. I feel very lucky to be here."

With the last sentence she lowered her eyes, as if his stare offended her modesty in the middle of an admission of indebtedness to him; but the eyes of the child still fixed him solemnly from under a square fringe of black curls, eyes shaped like olives, wary as those of a small animal, yet confident in the protection of her mother's arms. He

found it ridiculous that such a scrutiny should be embarrassing, yet so it was; for Glanvil knew little of children, and this child belonged not only to another race, but, as it seemed to him, to another species.

"The little girl seems all right," he said.

"Yes, she's splendid," the woman answered with a flash of pleasure. "You must say good morning to Captain Glanvil, Gina."

A break that was like laughter came into her voice as she spoke; for a moment all her shyness was lost in motherhood; her fingers tightened on the child's body in a movement that was almost reflex in its spontaneity; her eyes, no longer bashful, glowed.

"Gina, darling," she whispered, "you mustn't be shy now."

Very slowly, with a self-consciousness infinitely less than Glanvil's, the child silently put out her fist and Glanvil took it. It was warm and red, with little pink nails. Glanvil did not know what to do with it. It felt to him almost as if its warmth and its quick pulse came to him directly from the body of the mother, as if he felt the impulse of the woman's emotion transmitted to him through the living flesh of the child. Flushing in spite of himself, he stifled an impulse to pick the creature up in his arms and hold it close to him. Surely, through the same sensitive channel, the mother must be aware of his feeling.

To his comfort he discovered that she was not.

"English isn't natural to her with anyone but me," she said, eager to excuse. "Say: *'Buon giorno,'* Gina."

"Buon giorno," the child solemnly repeated, and the

sound of these clear-cut foreign words in a voice so babyish seemed to Glanvil a whimsical performance. He laughed out loud, and Gina, alarmed, absolved him of further responsibility by snatching her hand away.

"Oh, you're dreadful, you really are," Mrs. Salvia murmured, her lips on Gina's cheek; and in this interval Glanvil regained his self-possession.

"I won't keep you any longer," he said brusquely. "I only wanted to make it quite clear to you that anything that can be done for you will be done. If things don't suit you, you've only to mention it to the chief steward. If that doesn't act, you can come to me. But I don't think you'll have any difficulty. The Chinaman who looks after you is my own steward. He's quite honest. If you have any articles of value——"

"I haven't," she answered quickly, and again he became conscious of the clumsiness which he had put into the words of a notice in a hotel and of her pitiful, candid eyes. He prepared himself for a retreat from this final blunder. Gina still hid her head in her mother's bosom. That was just about all he was good for: to frighten children. It was an awful commentary on his warped and lonely life.

"Well, that's all, I think," he said. "Good-bye."

"Good-bye," she repeated.

As he stepped into the alley-way "one-bell" clanged. In another fifteen minutes he would be due on the flying-bridge to take the sun, and indeed, when he reached the deck the sun was already visible, a disc of white phosphorescence alternately dim and gleaming in the watery sky. Stalking for'ard along the clean and empty deck, he wondered if the same awkwardness would overtake him

in the presence of a child of his own. Some day he might be called upon to face this curious problem and find himself eager to win the confidence of a child like that. Or children. When he came to think of it, this woman whom he had regarded with the vague distrust of a savage confronted by the mystery of taboo was nothing but a child herself.

On the bridge Cochran greeted him laconically:

"Stromboli seven points on the starboard bow, sir."

"Keep your course, Mr. Cochran," he replied.

4

That night came rain. Through it they stole obscurely down the channel that shone like a wet street between the lamps of Reggio and Messina. Next morning the sun rose on the port bow as clean as if the rain had refreshed it, and the *Vega* herself, drenched in the level light, appeared a miracle of cleanliness from which the last contaminations of the land had been scoured and bleached away. On deck all was still; for the breeze that blew the ripples across the path of the sun came from dead aft at a pace no greater than the ten knots that the *Vega* was making. This morning air had a quality of dry lightness and clarity that tempted the crew to look upward to the white screens of the flying-bridge gleaming against a blue that quivered in the invisible heat which trailed from the black funnel. Now it was good to be alive again.

As Glanvil emerged from the chart-room and took his turn along the bridge, he saw the third engineer, a raw

youth from Greenock, come whistling for'ard from his bath with the sun in his hair. To Glanvil this man was almost a stranger; but when he saw the energy and blitheness of his gait, he smiled and waved his hand, and Macallum smiled back at him wondering what was the reason of this demonstration. A moment later Cheadle, who did not bathe in these latitudes, appeared and spat over the side; then he tramped for'ard to the level of the bridge; and Glanvil, leaning over, called "Good morning." Cheadle looked up and saluted, his face relaxing in a smile, and Glanvil knew by this that the wrong was healed.

On such a morning it seemed ridiculous that they should be at variance. In spite of his native surliness Cheadle had his points; and as he reflected on these Glanvil's mind went back to the cause of their difference, Mrs. Salvia and the black-haired child. He wondered if she had awakened to realize that the sun was shining. In another three days they would reach Port Said, and if this weather held, there would be no more question of discomfort. He whistled for the bo's'n, and told him to put a deck-chair and a Japanese chaise-longue that he had bought at Colombo near her cabin so that she would find them there when she came out. The quartermaster sounded "eight bells," and he went down to breakfast in the best of humours. It did not even irritate him when Cheadle, swamping his rice-cakes with syrup, confessed for the hundredth time on the voyage that he had "a sweet tuth," and then passed easily to the dangerous subject.

"I hope you found the passengers comfortable, sir," he said in a tone that was full of conciliation.

"A little rocky yesterday, Mr. Cheadle. They should be all right to-day."

"I think I'll take the opportunity of having a word with the lady this morning," said Cheadle. "Cheer her up a bit. It gives one a homely feeling, sir, to have that little girl on board."

"She's a shy little creature," said Glanvil.

"Ay, but they always take to me, somehow," Cheadle replied.

By three bells Mrs. Salvia was sitting in the grass chair outside her cabin. Glanvil could see her from the bridge, grey and small and immensely isolated, for the awnings were not yet up. He walked to and fro, enjoying the air of that sunny elevation. Time after time he turned and looked at her, expecting recognition, for surely she must have seen him in such a conspicuous position, but her eyes were always fixed on the blue sea or on the child who laughed and played about her. He wondered if she were disregarding him on purpose; it seemed possible that he had frightened both of them on the day before. He hadn't meant to do that. It was an impression that must be corrected. What could be more natural than to walk down from the bridge and say good morning?

Yet when, a moment later, Hendry and Cheadle presented themselves and they set out again on their solemn round of inspection, he found himself wilfully avoiding the starboard side of the saloon deck, and after he had dismissed them, returned in shyness to the bridge. Here in a little while Hendry and Cochran joined him with their sextants, waiting to take the sun. They hung together in silence. Time. . . . The bell clanged out the first of its

eight strokes; but Glanvil's attention which had been concentrated on the burning disc suddenly failed him; do what he might the observation was lost; for, on the deck below him, he had heard a voice, in which he recognized the flat vowels of Cheadle, and the clear calm tones of Mrs. Salvia's reply. In that moment he missed his contact. Hendry and Cochran were waiting to follow him into the chart-room. He excused himself: "Sorry, Mr. Hendry, I missed it. Work it out from your altitude and Mr. Cochran's."

"Very good, sir," Hendry answered, amazed.

He began to walk the bridge rapidly with his hands behind his back, and every time that he approached its starboard extremity, too confused and proud to look downward, he heard snatches of speech from Cheadle and Mrs. Salvia, and once a sudden peal of Gina's laughter. For a moment there was silence; Cheadle had left her; but almost immediately he returned, dragging with him a deck-chair which he placed at Mrs. Salvia's side. There was no shyness about Cheadle.

For half an hour he paced the bridge in envious and angry silence. Ah Qui, emerging from the saloon alleyway, swung the bell for lunch, and as Glanvil descended he saw Cheadle, who had risen from his chair, catch at the child, who stood before him with folded hands, and hug her in his arms in the way that his own impulse had shown him on the morning before. He saw the face of Mrs. Salvia regarding this scene with a mute and, as it seemed to him, a puzzled smile. Then swiftly her eyes flashed in Glanvil's direction; his hand came up to the salute, but the sun blinded her so that she did not see

his gesture, and he blundered on into the saloon doorway and out of sight, wondering if, for some unexplained offence, she had purposely avoided him. Perhaps, he reflected, she thought that he had been remiss in not inquiring for her that morning. He was not going to stand on ceremonies of that kind. Hadn't he made that clear enough a week ago in Marx's office?

But the discomfort Glanvil endured that morning was nothing to what followed. After Cheadle's first overture, the comedy of which Marx had signalled the prologue began with a vengeance; for even if Mrs. Salvia had not been physically attractive she was unique. Her loneliness was a challenge to the chivalry of every man aboard; the approach to her presence was made through the medium of Gina, a kind of flying embassy with whom the most remote could establish contact.

That same afternoon the third engineer followed the lead of his chief. The encounter was natural enough; for his cabin was only separated from that of Mrs. Salvia by an iron bulkhead, and Gina, with the instinct of a kitten sniffing every corner of its new home, had strayed from her mother's side to raise the curtain and fix inquisitive eyes on a figure in a faded blue boiler-suit, who lay stretched on his locker reading *La Vie Parisienne*. Her mother called to her, first in Italian, then in English. Five minutes later the third engineer, his fair mop subdued, his badged cap tilted rakishly, was established opposite Mrs. Salvia in the deck-chair that Glanvil had thoughtfully provided.

The awkwardness and the uncouth Glasgow accent of this visitor amused her. At first he seemed to her like

some ungainly Newfoundland puppy, a creature whose native clumsiness must be humoured; but as she listened, gravely, without the suspicion of a twinkle in her blue eyes, his reserve melted away and he began to give her his confidence, tempted by the unfamiliar company of a woman to talk to of homely things: of his own mother who waited for him in a wet and windy street in Greenock, of the heathery hillsides that overhung the valleys behind Dunoon with special reference to his national anthem, Mary of Argyle, and even of a lassie named Jean Fraser with whom the song and the place were associated in his mind. In the middle of this stammering rhapsody he stopped:

"I'll doubt you'll ever have been in Scotland? A can tell by yeir accent you're pure English."

"Yes," she told him, "I come from Devonshire."

"Then you'll be a countrywoman of the Third and the Old Man."

"Do you mean the chief engineer?"

"No, no, the captain."

"But *he's* not old?"

"That makes no difference," Macallum laughed; "the captain's the Old Man whatever his age may be."

"How interesting," she murmured. "Do you know the name of the town he comes from?"

Macallum scratched his head. "Ay, Brixham's the name of it. You'll see their ketch-rigged trawlers any day off the Start. And Harvey, he comes from a place called Kingsbridge, somewhere behind Bolt Head."

As soon as Macallum left her Cheadle reappeared. By this time he seemed almost an old friend; but her instinct

told her quickly that it was Gina rather than herself that attracted him. All the time that he was speaking to her, with his flat slow Lancashire inflections, his lustreless eyes were following the movements of the child. He coaxed her towards him, and when he had caught her, imprisoned her between his bony knees; his long hands were hungry for her body and her soft limbs. He seemed to Helen Salvia weary and older than his years, a little slovenly and pathetic. He was different in every way from what she imagined a sailor should be, and whenever she let him talk, his mind flapped back like a tired bird to Newton-in-Makerfield, a place that she had never heard of, but which, to him, was evidently the axle of the universe. She tried to bring the conversation round to Glanvil, for the discovery that he came from Brixham had set her curiosity on fire; but as soon as the captain's name was mentioned Cheadle became wary, and she was quick to guess that the subject was one that he wished to avoid. No doubt he was a little jealous of a younger man's command; and that was natural enough. Tactfully she abandoned the subject, her curiosity unsatisfied.

Nor yet did Hendry, who followed Cheadle in this procession of visitors that swooped down on her, like greedy bees upon a solitary flower, give her any greater satisfaction. Infinitely more gallant than the forlorn Cheadle or the awkward Macallum, he buzzed about her like a great red bumble. He was bluff and hearty, leaning up against the stanchion and smiling with his thick neck scorched in the sun.

"I'll ask the captain if we can get the awnings put up for you to-morrow," he said. "If there's anything that

doesn't suit you on deck, you've only to mention it to me. It isn't every day we get a lady on board."

He laughed loudly for no reason, and as he did so she caught a glance of his gay blue eyes and blushed. It was the glance of a child who knows that he is playing with some forbidden thing, half thrilled and half ashamed. In a moment she knew that this man would like to make love to her but dared not, and when, a moment later, he mentioned his wife and volunteered to show her a photograph, she guessed the reason of the restraint that underlay his fear, the wavering fidelity of a man who knows his own weakness and tries to hide it even from himself. It was an uneasy interview, and yet she felt sorry for him. She felt sorry for all sailors.

Strangely enough this element of compassion never entered into her relations with Glanvil or Harvey. It was not surprising that Glanvil occupied a position apart; was he not, by the grace of Marx, the agent of destiny to whom she owed her very presence on the *Vega?* It did not seem strange to her that he kept his distance: the elevation of the flying bridge above the saloon deck was a symbol that she accepted. Even if he never spoke to her again before they reached Panda she determined that she would not feel slighted. She trusted him implicitly; his command gave a sense of stability to the whole adventure, and the fact that in their divided childhood they had been almost neighbours made her feel that between them there was no need of explanation.

Harvey, in a smaller degree, shared the confidence she placed in his commander. He was the first member of the *Vega's* crew that she had met; and that, of itself, gave

him a special, if sentimental claim on her. In his case also there were no reservations. They slipped without effort into a perfectly natural friendship, based on a host of common associations and memories beside which the slight difference in their ages counted for nothing. She always looked forward to his visits, for they talked of Devonshire ways and places, and his speech, which in moments of enthusiasm always revealed his origin, had the power of transporting her imagination backward to idyllic days. Add to this that she liked to look at him; for he was clean and handsome and of an engaging frankness.

She soon discovered that he had a passion for books, and though this was a province into which she could not follow him far, her attentive silence encouraged him to talk of his enthusiasm until his eyes glowed, and in the rapture of self-expression his face radiated a happiness that she was eager to share. Whichever way she took him he rang true, like a well-found bell, and not the least of the qualities she admired in him was his loyalty to Glanvil.

There remained the second and fourth engineers and the second officer, Cochran. So far she had achieved no contact with Cochran nearer than a passing salute. The man seemed rough and untamed. He went about his duties doggedly as though he had neither time nor interest for anything else. She laughed to herself when she discovered that he, too, had fallen a victim to the fascinations of Gina; the strange couple were playing ball together on the after well-deck, and when she saw them she retired guiltily, leaving Gina to her conquest, for Cochran, in trousers and singlet, had caught her on his way from the

bath, and she feared to embarrass him. From that moment she decided that she liked him too.

She liked them all, not so much for what they were as because they were English, because they were easy to understand. More than this, there was something in their deference to her and in their naïve confidences that complimented her and made her feel that she stood to them in a relation that was vaguely maternal. One could always mother an Englishman; one might as well mother a tiger as an Italian. She felt that it was her duty to listen to them when they disclosed to her the things that were nearest to their hearts, but never, among themselves, confessed. However different they might be in age or physique, the secrets that they consciously or unconsciously revealed to her were curiously alike. Whether it were the hungry child-worship of Cheadle, the nostalgia of Macallum, or Hendry's repressed admiration, the charge was sacred, and she was honoured by it.

It was valuable to her in yet another way: for when she identified her own interest with theirs and allowed their thoughts to be mirrored on her silence like the images of casual trees upon the surface of a stream, she was able to forget the direction in which her own life steadily flowed, and the bourne to which it grew momently nearer; the hot strand of Panda as uncertain in its revelation as the further shore of death itself.

In the suspension of life at sea it was easy to believe that time stood still. For three mornings in succession her eyes had opened on the same halcyon blue that had met them on the day after their passage of the straits of Messina. At sunset on the third, Harvey, who, together

with Glanvil, had been her least frequent visitor, suddenly called her to the port-side and showed her through his glasses a peaked line of cloud, more dense and real than any vapour; clouds petrified, clouds suddenly fixed in ice, they seemed. "The mountains of Crete," he told her. "Hundred-citied Crete." He smiled as he spoke, for the vision excited him. "A tremendous island," he said, "more than a hundred miles long. But that's not the point. It's the history of the place. All the civilization of Cnossno, you know; the very beginnings of civilization in the Mediterranean. I've a book about it that I picked up in Plymouth last voyage. I don't know if you'd care to see it. You may be interested in that sort of thing."

She thanked him. His face, that had become unhappy at her hesitation, lightened. She wanted, above all things, to be kind to him. "I knew that you'd be interested," he said eagerly. "You'd better take the glasses while I go and fetch it."

"That's so good of you," she said.

He gave her the glasses. She took them clumsily, touching his fingers. "I'm sorry," he muttered, and at that moment she found herself face to face with Glanvil, who had approached them unheard. Harvey hurriedly saluted. "Letting Mrs. Salvia have a look at Crete, sir," he said. Glanvil turned without a smile.

"Yes, Mr. Harvey."

He passed on; but in the look that he had given them there was something that disturbed her. She was blushing. She felt the colour rising in her neck and throat, she felt it burning in her ears, a flood beyond her control. Confused, ashamed, she stood staring at the exalted snow

but seeing nothing at all until, all of a sudden, the word Crete came back to her, but not with the connotations that Harvey had suggested. She recognized it as the first milestone on her pilgrimage. After Crete, Port Said; after Suez, Panda. Panda was growing nearer, calculably near. When Harvey returned with his book to the place where he had left her, she had vanished. Cochran, on the bridge, saw him standing, baffled, with the book in his hand, and laughed.

5

Out of the Nile-green water, at dawn on the fifth day, the Delta suddenly revealed itself, not as land, but as a thicket of aspiring masts. The sky lightened, and Port Said swam like a long shred of mirage in the midst of its lagoons. Slowly they crept into the shelter of the mole and anchored astern of a contemptuous P. & O. whose buff deck-houses towered massively ahead. The white morning sky was thick with mottled kites that soared and swooped above the *Vega* with anxious whistling cries; the yellow water boiled with the converging propellers and oars of creatures whose greediness and clamour competed with that of the kites. Before the anchor thundered down Helen Salvia became aware of this approaching tumult. Standing in the mouth of her alley-way she saw Harvey posted at the gangway like a superb blond Goth confronting the dark swarms of Africa. Cheadle hurried past her with a solemn face on his way to give his instructions to the official of the coaling company. "Best close your porthole and lock up your cabin, Mrs. Salvia," he said.

"Coaling's no joke on a ship like this, and these Egyptians are the blackest thieves born."

She obeyed him. The cabin became intolerably close, and Gina, who had been wakened early by the vibrations of the siren, was fractious. From time to time an insolent dark face peered through the porthole; the deck resounded with a hurried trampling of naked feet and strange guttural cries; from the lighters that approached the *Vega* with their cargoes of coal and coal-black humanity, and clung to her flanks like slow flat-bodied parasites, arose a high antiphonal chanting that was like the war-song of a piratical horde. Ah Qui knocked at the door and thrust in a tray with her breakfast. After that it seemed to her that she was a forgotten prisoner.

And indeed she was forgotten. From the moment at which the propeller had ceased to revolve the crew of the *Vega* had other things to think of. Glanvil, in his cabin, was busy with the agents and the port officials; Hendry and Cochran stood shouting themselves hoarse with the stevedores; Rennels, in his pantry, concocted obscene bargains with a Maltese comprador, while Cheadle talked coal, wondering how much *bakshish* he could corner, and Harvey scoured the decks for loafers and tried hard to keep his temper. All through that morning the sea-cleansed whiteness of the ship was soiled by a drift of coal-dust that filtered into every cranny like the sand of a black desert. To and fro along the swaying gang-boards that the lighters had thrust like obscene tentacles into the bunkers, a thin-legged multitude poured with its baskets of coal. By noon, when the sun beat cruelly through the dusty air and the bells of a dozen ships made a clangour

of overlapping tones, four hundred tons had been loaded. At the end of luncheon Harvey, whom Cochran had now relieved at the gangway, accosted Glanvil on the way to his cabin.

"I'm going ashore, sir," he said. "If you've no objection I should like to take Mrs. Salvia."

"What's that?" Glanvil grunted, although he knew quite well what it was.

"Mrs. Salvia and the little girl, sir."

"Why do you ask me that? I have nothing to do with your private affairs, Mr. Harvey."

Harvey smiled nervously. "I only wondered if it was in order, sir."

Without another word Glanvil left him standing. He stalked into his cabin and shut the door behind him. He sat down at his desk in its abominable closeness and tried to write a letter. He could not think. In some unreasonable way Harvey's request had disorganized him. It was a captain's privilege to be rude to his officers; but this was the second occasion on which the name of Mrs. Salvia had stirred him to incivility, and that seemed significant. Significant of what? He hadn't signed on as a censor of morals. As long as it didn't interfere with the discipline of the ship Mrs. Salvia and Harvey might do what they liked. It wasn't that. And it wasn't, he assured himself, that he was jealous of Harvey. The woman meant nothing, had never meant anything to him.

To suggest that he was jealous of Mrs. Salvia was equally preposterous. It was true that he had always looked upon Harvey as the one member of his crew with whom he could ever claim any intimacy; but that was only

another reason why he should encourage anything that would give Harvey pleasure. He had no right to suppose that Harvey had proposed this excursion out of anything but sheer kindness of heart. In whichever way he looked at it his attitude was churlish and unreasonable. He was getting old and grumpy and offensive, grudging to others the pleasure that he couldn't take himself. This singular degeneration in his character had only begun since they reached Naples a fortnight ago. Only a fortnight ago. To-morrow would be Christmas Day. Good-will toward men. *La illaha ill' Allah: La illaha ill' Allah!* the coal gang chanted. How could a man write letters in this heathen hubbub? He put aside his papers and went up on to the bridge deck, where he walked to and fro in the sun reading the gigantic advertisements of cigarettes with which the blank ends of offices were painted, determining to conquer this most uncomfortable mood.

Night fell. The coaling ceased, and the lighters with one accord withdrew their tentacles from the bunkers. They drifted away into the dark with their exhausted human freight, leaving the *Vega* to an almost uncanny silence in which the normal activities of the crew fell back into their own unhurried rhythm. A whistle shrilled; on her foremast rose the three vertical lights of the pilot's signal. Over the fo'c'sle head the seamen of the watch uncoiled the cable of the stuttering arc-light which the Canal Company supplied for passages by night. Cochran was scouring the black and gritty deck for the last discouraged hawkers of tobacco, Florida water and ostrich plumes. He drove them to the gangway like cattle and stood at the head of it awaiting an order for the ladder to

be lifted. As he stood there, hot and vindictive, he heard Glanvil's voice calling him from the bridge:

"Mr. Harvey and the passengers on board, Mr. Cochran?"

"Came aboard an hour ago, sir."

"Very good. Hoist away."

Deep in the ship's bowels the telegraph jangled: "Stand by!" The engines rumbled heavily; she stole forward like a grimy ghost, spreading a smooth wave in which the reflected light of the shore-side boulevard was broken into a thousand glancing facets. Glanvil, standing at the pilot's side, found Harvey at his elbow.

"Ah, there you are, Mr. Harvey. Had a good time ashore?"

"First rate, sir." Harvey answered in a low voice.

Before he came on duty he had carried Mrs. Salvia's chair on to the boat-deck, anxious that she should not miss the spectacle of the canal at night, and when she had put the tired child to bed, she came there, unseen and unheard. She lay back, staring at the sky and the high lights of the *Vega* that trembled against the stars. On one side the desert, on the other the waters of Lake Menzaleh mingled with the night, but each was equally unreal to her; the only reality, and that a ghostly one, was the arc of light that slowly devoured the darkness before the *Vega's* moving bows; a fan-shaped field of water and moony expanses of sand in which the phantoms of men and palms and frightened camels appeared as pallid as the wings of nocturnal moths. And all the time that she lay there, with Harvey's rug tucked about her knees, for it was very cold, she was thinking of their adventure ashore.

To herself Port Said, with its endless dusty avenues, had seemed at first less strange than it might have been before her six years' sojourn in Naples. An unaccustomed shyness had dulled her senses; but, in a little while, she had found herself seeing everything through Harvey's eager eyes, and immediately the tawdry town had revealed itself in a wealth of unfamiliar colour that made her feel as if she had recaptured youth. His unspoiled capacity for enjoyment infected and thrilled her; there was a new interest in every step. She surrendered herself to his direction so completely that the enjoyment of the moment became isolated from all the other circumstances of her life.

It seemed entirely natural that he and Gina and herself should be together; it was as if they had known each other all their lives. The child had taken to Harvey, abandoning all her little wild reserves; she had slipped her brown hand into his, prattling to him in her awkward, foreign English, and Helen Salvia had watched them with a curious, happy pride, as though not only Gina but Harvey himself belonged to her. She saw, in such contrast to the dark crowds through which they moved, his fairness, his stature, the cleanliness of his strength; her heart was troubled with other contrasts, and this made her dreamy.

"You're tired," he had said, "I think you'd better sit down for a moment. Let's go in here."

He led the way into a glittering store, beloved of all sailors, and made her sit down at the counter. He took another chair for himself and Gina climbed on to his knees. A thin girl with black, oiled hair and dusky fingernails attended them.

"Now you must help me," he said shyly. "I want to choose a present for a lady, and I know nothing about such things."

She smiled and told him that she would do her best, but beneath her smile lurked a faint subacid jealousy. She wondered who the woman was for whom the present was designed. The very knowledge of this creature's existence destroyed their perfect comradeship. On the glass counter before them lay a tumbled heap of Egyptian finery, *galabiehs* of shot silk, blue-glazed scarabs, necklaces of ivory and Abyssinian jade, soft-soled slippers with peaked toes from the Mouski at Cairo. Among these she pointed to a pair made of vermilion kid.

"Why not those?" she said. "But do you know what size she takes?"

He hesitated, looking downward at her own feet; she was seized with an agony of shame for her worn shoes and would have hidden them.

"About your own size," he said. "I should think that's near enough."

"Oh, no, it isn't," she told him. "You have to be very exact in these matters," and, in the end, she chose for him a shawl from Assiut of black and silver gauze, and a dim green necklace of jade beads.

When he asked the price she heard the girl behind the counter murmuring in Italian to a man who had joined her; she realized instantly that they were putting up the price, as was their way with sailors. She answered quickly in the same language, and the price descended, among a flutter of apologies. Harvey stared at her in surprise. "What's all that about?" he asked.

"They were going to overcharge you. I heard them talking Italian."

"How clever of you! I should never have known."

"It isn't clever at all. You forget——"

But they had both remembered and the shadow of the distant Salvia fell upon them. Nor was it lifted when they took tea together in the great glass veranda of the Casino Palace. From that moment she shrank backward into her old shyness and lethargy. She was stiff with so much walking and the sun had no pity. On the way home Gina, whose sensitive spirits reflected her mother's mood, complained of a tiredness that was very near to tears, and Harvey, who seemed pathetically anxious to renew the gaiety they had lost, insisted on picking the child up in his arms and carrying her. They made a strange procession passing thus along the boulevard, and the touts who were posted outside every second shop to point its virtues in the language of the stranger paid them an attention that embarrassed her. But Harvey was not embarrassed. He had offered to carry Gina and no false shame should stop him. How jolly it was of him, and what a boy he looked with his wide honest eyes!

On the boat-deck it was getting cold and colder. The *Vega,* lucky in finding a clear passage, made a steady six knots, and a southerly air blew chilly over the desert. Their progress was so smooth and dreamlike; the white scroll of sand, with its recurrent phantom palms, so steadily, so silently unwound that she might easily have been hypnotized into sitting there until she froze. She wrapped Harvey's rug round her shoulders, preparing to

go below, and as she rose to her feet there swam into the light of the mid-distance, where she had imagined land, the sails of a *dahabiyeh*. Poised like the pointed wings of some huge, moony bird, they dwelt upon the unseen water till a following darkness overtook them. She groped her way down the companion to her own cabin. On the cushioned locker Gina slept soundly. Very quietly she undressed, but as she came to climb into her bunk she saw a parcel on the pillow, and when she examined it she discovered that it contained the black and silver Assiut shawl that Harvey had bought in Hooghly's store.

"He shouldn't have done it," she thought. "Oh, what a trick to play me!"

But before she switched off the light she bent before the mirror to try the effect of it against her bare shoulders, her neck, her dark hair; and the face that shone back at her smiled.

6

From the hour when the *Vega* left Suez reeking in a blood-red sunset behind her, it seemed as if the rhythm of life aboard her quickened, and its conditions became more intense. Twelve hours before with muted engines she had stolen through the sand like a ship in a dream; but from the Gulf of Suez she fled before the north wind like a thing possessed by the barren horror of Sinai whose mountains encompassed her in their lunar desolation. On the second evening as they made The Brothers, the wind

fell dead like a bird caught in the fume of some poisonous crater. Westward a young moon sank helplessly upon the molten summits of the hills that sheltered Thebes.

"December or no December," Cheadle growled, "we're going to get it hot. I shall issue tea to the stoke-hold."

Day after day the *Vega* plodded southward over a black and glassy sea; the languid wind kept pace with her; her awnings hung as slack as though she lay suspended in a calm; through the hot silence her engines groaned as if their bearings threatened to seize. Day after day the sun rose with a fiercer zest. Gathering strength from their distress, giving them no grace of twilight, it rushed westward, eager to close its torrid circle and rise to torture them again. In this vast forcing-house the bodies of the *Vega's* crew wilted and strange spiritual growths arose.

The solitary Glanvil was aware of their germination. His isolation made him sensitive to the least change in the atmospheric tension of the saloon; he knew that as the heat increased and the *Vega* ploughed her way toward strange stars, a tempest was brewing, but it was not until they had escaped the jaws of Bab-el-Mandeb and rounded the white sands of Guardafui, hugging the Somali coast with the monsoon on the quarter, that the storm broke.

It was natural that Helen Salvia should have been the nucleus about which this tropical thunder gathered; but it was Gina, curiously enough, who supplied the spark of detonation. From the first it had been clear that the child would become the pet of the ship's company, partly because she satisfied the craving for youth that gnawed at the heart of middle-aged men such as Hendry and Chea-

dle, and partly because through her favour lay a short cut to the graces of Mrs. Salvia.

On Christmas Day, at Suez, the child had been overwhelmed with unexpected presents. Cheadle, cunning in family-lore, had given her Turkish Delight; the chief steward a tippet of ostrich feather, *bakshish* from the comprador who sold him vegetables; Hendry a slender ivory bangle that she would soon outgrow; Harvey the necklace of Egyptian jade which her mother had chosen in Hooghly's store.

Mrs. Salvia, sitting apart, was amused and flattered by these tributes to her daughter's charms and the indirect compliment to herself. She shared in the child's delight and the hesitant advances of the first days soon developed into a general friendliness. Day after day, under the lazy awnings, she held her little court, touched by the anxiety to please that the older men showed her, smiling at Macallum's raw seriousness, keeping for Harvey, whom the Port Said adventure had placed on a different footing, a low-voiced intimacy and long moonlit silences that were thrilling to both.

The only members of the *Vega's* crew who remained outside her circle of attraction were Glanvil and Cochran; Glanvil because this was the course on which he had determined; Cochran by reason of the obstinate shyness which affected him in the presence of a woman whom he could not buy.

Of the two Cochran was the more to be pitied, for, in his boyhood, life had dealt hardly with him, casting him out of Belfast, without family or friends, upon the mercies

of the sea. As a child he had known the icy terrors of the Horn, and quivered beneath the rope-end of a wind-jammer's mate. From this purgatory he had doggedly emerged; sailed as a quartermaster in "steam," hoarded his savings and put himself to "school" with a beer-sodden shell-back at Cardiff who, in intervals of sobriety, had pushed him through the first examinations of the Board of Trade. During this period he had lived in a seaman's lodging-house, the annexe of a brothel off the Bute Road, and passing thence with his ticket to the berth of third mate on a Mediterranean collier, he had continued his assaults on knowledge until at the age of thirty he stood possessed of a Master's certificate. On ship-board he was the complete seaman, with the practice of the craft at his fingertips; on shore, or in the company of land-dwellers, he became, almost literally, a fish out of water, having little in common with men or women but liquor or lust.

Apart from the opportunities for indulgence that it offered him he hated the land, and envied, with a sort of racial antipathy, others to whom it offered pleasures that he could neither understand nor share. Once on board ship he could hold his own; for his seamanly qualities made him respected; but the introduction of Helen Salvia and her child had modified the whole atmosphere of the ship like a secret leaven; suddenly he found himself at a disadvantage, impotently hating and desiring the cause of the change and jealous of those who profited by it, particularly Harvey.

At first he had regarded the Salvias' invasion with a deliberate scornful disinterest. Passengers were none of his business; he had signed on to keep his watches and

draw his pay; he had no intention of making a fool of himself like the others; but, little by little, the very violence of his attitude made him more prone to infection. As he walked the bridge in the middle watch he was conscious of the influence of Helen Salvia, sitting on the deck below; he heard her low voice, laughter, words that he listened for but couldn't quite catch, and these sounds threw him into a silent fury, so that he wished her and her courtiers at the bottom of the sea. He was like a starved dog, snarling within sight of food but too distrustful to approach it.

With a more particular bitterness he saw the presents with which Gina had been inundated on Christmas Day. He told himself that he was wiser than to waste his money on such foolishness, but was envious, all the time, because he had let that obvious opportunity slip. To approach Mrs. Salvia directly was beyond him; but hungrily and secretly he lay in wait for Gina, longing to touch the child and hold her on his knee as he had seen Harvey and Cheadle do, ashamed that others should see his advances, yet passionately afraid that they might fail. It was in the middle of one of these experiments that Helen Salvia had surprised him on the after well-deck and turned away, amused at the strange spectacle, yet anxious not to wound his shyness.

Again and again Cochran tried to tempt the child into accepting him as a playmate; but Gina, although she was pleased to flirt with him for a moment, was quick to realize his difference from her other admirers. His clumsiness, his greedy eyes and all his rugged exterior frightened her no less than his gruff whispers and the air of mysteri-

ous secrecy that he put into his courtship. It pleased her to nestle close to the smooth face of Harvey, her real friend, who had carried her through the street at Port Said and given her a jade necklace; to sit on the bony knees of Cheadle, who fed her with Turkish Delight and smelt of Florida Water; to play, as a concession, with the masonic symbol on the chief steward's watch-chain or investigate the hidden delicacies of his cabin, which was half pantry; she was even ready, aping the attitude of her mother, to give a shy and serious greeting to Glanvil; but Cochran was a different matter altogether. First of all he had given her nothing; secondly, she did not understand him; thirdly, he was not a friend of her mother's; in short, his company was neither profitable nor amusing, so she avoided it.

At this point he might easily have let well alone and accepted his dismissal; but this the stubbornness of his nature and his unabated hunger would not allow. In face of all the child's pouting discouragements he persisted, until her distaste hardened into a positive dislike. She ran from him whenever she saw him approaching, seeking immediate refuge with any of her allies that happened to be near, hiding herself breathlessly behind the lampman or the carpenter or even Ah Qui, their moon-faced, pock-marked Cantonese. They all laughed at her and her fears. Cochran laughed too, but he took their laughter bitterly and determined to be even with her before he had finished.

One evening he found Gina alone and snatched his opportunity. He suddenly appeared to her, ruddy from his bath, in a flowered cotton kimono.

"Now I've caught you!" he grinned, picking her up and holding her against his hairy chest. Gina wriggled in his arms; she fought and tore at his face with her nails like a cat; but the pain and her fierceness only made him hold her tighter. He covered her face with greedy kisses, and when she had screamed her strength away, he put her down and laughed as she ran wailing to her mother.

Later Mrs. Salvia softly confided what had happened to Harvey. The night was stifled, breathless. Watery lightning flickered over the sky.

"Of course," she told him, "Mr. Cochran is rather what you'd call a rough diamond; he never speaks to me; but that was pushing roughness a little too far. Gina was nearly frightened out of her life. The child dislikes him, so I wish he'd leave her alone."

Harvey left her in a hot fury. He went straight to Cochran's cabin. Cochran was not there. He found him drinking whisky with the chief steward; the futile scratch of Gina's fingernails had left a weal down his brick-red cheek from the left eye to the angle of his mouth. He looked up flushed and good-humoured.

"Hallo, Third," he said. "Have one with me?"

Then Harvey told him what he thought of him. "The kid can't bear the sight of you," he said. "Can't you leave her alone?"

Cochran listened, a tumid vein bulged, like another vertical weal, on his shining forehead, but he never ceased to smile, and Harvey's anger increased. Rennels, who was standing in his shirt-sleeves, took hold of his arm with a hot hand.

"Come off it, old boy," he leered. "Come off it. Let

the Second have his joke the same as the rest of us, and try a drop of this. The right stuff, I can tell you. V. O. V. and no nonsense."

As he spoke he reached down a glass which he would have forced into Harvey's hands; but Harvey scarcely heeded him; he was looking at the vein in Cochran's forehead and the smile on his lips. The night seemed to grow hotter round them; all three were sweating and staring at each other, Rennels fuddled and anxious, Cochran still smiling with a pipe in his teeth, Harvey blind with an increasing anger.

"You may smile, Cochran," he went on, "but, by God! if you try that game again——"

"Steady, boy, steady! Don't shout, now," Rennels persuaded.

Cochran took the pipe from the grip of his teeth and tilted his chair backward.

"Well, Harvey, what then?"

"You'll have to answer for it to me. That's all."

"Answer for it to you be damned!" said Cochran carelessly. He was keeping his temper well in hand. "You're the third officer of this ship, not the master, so you can damned well mind your own business. So can your Mrs. Salvia, and when next you kiss her on the boat-deck you can tell her so with my compliments."

"Stea—dy!" the helpless Rennels breathed; but before the word was well out of his mouth there was a splinter of glass, and half the contents of his cabin were scattered in the track of a spinning human tornado. Harvey had begun it with a blow at the face under which Cochran,

skilled in the tactics of a rough-house, had ducked. Cochran, head down, ran in and grappled. Rennels, who had rashly thrown himself into the mêlée with the idea of separating them, was sent crashing into his own writing-table, carrying with him a reading lamp whose smashed bulb exploded like a pistol. Now they fought in a darkness that stank of spilt spirit, clinching and separating in a haphazard struggle, grunting, gasping, sweating. Into their blows flowed on the one side all the force of an ideal passion, savagely reacting from insult, on the other the bitterness of stubborn repressions accumulated under a brazen sky and liberated in violence. Suddenly all the strength of Cochran seemed to gather upwards to his shoulders, flinging him forward with lowered head like an animate battering-ram, a charging bull. It took the taller Harvey in the midriff and brought him down with a crash to the floor, where he lay, mute as a felled tree, propped against Rennels's legs, with Cochran on the top of him.

"God! You've killed him!" Rennels cried. "Oh Lord! Oh Lord!"

Cochran came giddily to his feet. He stood for a moment as if he were uncertain which way he were going to fall, nodding his head backward and forward like a toy mandarin.

"Winded," he gasped. "All right. No harm. Giv'm a drink."

"The light's gawn," Rennels whined. "That was a new bulb, too."

"Damn the bulb! Where's the other switch?"

"God! I'd forgotten it," Rennels laughed nervously.

He was as helpless as an old woman in a flurry. "There it is; over by the door."

Cochran swayed to the doorway and turned the switch; no light came, only a gentle whirring and a subdued flutter as of bats' wings.

"No, that's the fan," Rennels breathed quickly; "the fan. Just below . . . that's got it. Oh, my God!"

A single dispassionate light shone from the middle of the ceiling on the floor of the cabin scattered with wreckage of wood and splintered glass, smeared with spilt ink and whisky. Harvey lay limp where he had fallen; his white drill jacket, one sleeve ripped from the shoulder-seam, was spattered with red and black. Nothing moved but the electric fan, which purred softly with pennants of tricolour ribbon fluttering away from it like snakes' tongues. Rennels stared mutely at Cochran, who stood like a figure of wax. Suddenly the knees of the figure seemed to go weak and Cochran rolled forward on his face, quietly, as if some invisible wind had taken his legs from under him.

Rennels staggered to the door. He could not face this alone; he must call for help. In his confusion he found himself within arm's length of Glanvil.

"What's this, Mr. Rennels, what's this?"

"No fault of mine, sir," he stammered. "Mr. Harvey and Mr. Cochran. The Second says he's only winded, sir. I hope to God he's right."

Cochran began to cough. He pulled himself up and sat glowering at the scene with suffused and stupid eyes. Glanvil had passed quickly to the fallen figure of Harvey. He disentangled a limp arm from the wreckage of the

table and put his fingers on the pulse; his own blood beat so violently in his wrists that, at first, he could feel nothing. Cochran coughed and spluttered, and spat blood on the floor. "No pulse," thought Glanvil, "then it's murder"; but even as the enormity of the situation overwhelmed him, the tendons beneath his fingers twitched spasmodically and Harvey clenched his fist.

The intense relief of that moment made Glanvil's voice unsteady: "Yes, it's all right, he's winded." By the end of the sentence he had controlled it. "Give me some water, Mr. Rennels."

It was Cheadle, lank and wondering, who passed Glanvil the carafe. "Dear, dear, dear!" he sighed.

But before Glanvil could dash the water on his face Harvey opened his eyes and stared blankly at the light overhead.

"Drink this," Glanvil commanded, tilting the carafe to his lips. Harvey supported it with incoordinate hands. He took one gulp and paused, as if he had forgotten how to swallow.

"Drink it down," said Glanvil.

Harvey obeyed him, blinked, and reopened his eyes.

"Is that you, sir?" he said. "Thank you."

Glanvil rose to his feet, by this time completely self-possessed.

"Will you kindly look after this mess, Mr. Cheadle? I think they're both of them all right."

"Certainly, sir," said Cheadle. "Dear me!"

"Come with me, Mr. Rennels," Glanvil continued; and the chief steward followed him to his cabin.

7

Glanvil stood leaning up against the bunk, propped on his elbows.

"Well, Mr. Rennels?"

"I've told you, sir, that it's no fault of mine," Rennels began.

"Nobody said it was. Tell me what happened."

"I was sitting at my table, sir, making up the accounts that had got a bit behind since Suez, and keeping up a running conversation, like, with the second officer when the Third came in. I could see he was in a stew, but the Second——"

"One moment. Had the second officer been drinking?"

"Nothing of the sort, sir," Rennels answered indignantly. "One peg of whisky and water. Not another drop."

"Very well. Go on. What next?"

"Well, sir, it's hard to remember at the moment; my nerves are a bit upset; but, as I tell you, I could see that the Third was a bit off his horse; he was looking for trouble, and that's a fact. He started talking up pretty violent to the Second about the little girl; something that had happened in the second dog-watch, I gathered; and the Second, what with the heat and the rest of it, took it a bit rough and coupled the name of the Third with this Mrs. Salvia. You know what ship's gossip is, sir——"

"Yes."

"Well, the next thing I knew, sir, was like a young typhoon let loose. The lamp carried away—I'd only put

a new bulb in it yesterday—and the two of them at each other's throats like a couple of dogs. After that you know as much as I do, sir."

For a long moment Glanvil was silent. He crossed the cabin and sat at his desk, staring vaguely at a copy of the "African Pilot," part three, which lay open upon it.

"Very well, Rennels," he said at last. "You'd better go back and lend a hand to the chief engineer. Send the bo's'n along here."

"Very good, sir." Rennels hesitated. "I hope I've made it quite clear, sir, that this unfortunate business was no fault of mine."

"Quite." His eyes returned to the book. Without comprehension he began to read:

Where range is considerable, there are indraughts to all bays and bights, even when tide (general run) is parallel to the shore. Turn of tidal stream off-shore is seldom coincident with high or low water ashore. On coasts where there is much diurnal irregularity in the tides, the amount of rise and fall can never be depended upon and additional caution is necessary. Caution! The bo's'n knocked at the door. His eyes goggled with excitement and eagerness to know what was afoot. Glanvil left him unsatisfied.

"Give my compliments to the chief officer," he said. "Tell him that the second and third officers will be unable to take their watches on deck to-night. I shall relieve him myself as soon as possible. That's all."

"Very good, sir," said the bo's'n, with a shade of regret in his voice.

"One moment, Pitman. Tell Mrs. Salvia that I'll be glad if she will see me here, at once."

Discipline, discipline; the word rang in his head. He had not the least idea of what he was going to say to her nor how, exactly, he could assert his authority. Nothing of the sort had ever troubled him before. The *Vega* was an orderly ship; not a better disciplined in the fleet; everything ship-shape and Bristol fashion as the old captains used to say on the pier-head at Brixham. Some of the company's old men played the martinet unreasonably. That was a symptom of weakness. Theirs weren't the disciplined ships. His own way was better; no blustering, no familiarity, a steady hand all the time and dead straight dealing with officers and crew. It paid. They might grouse like hell, but he knew he could count on them. Even these two; even now. Cochran with all his service knew the meaning of discipline if anyone did. Harvey, coming of a different and a kinder school, was more easily understood. Neither of them would have flown at the other's throat without the instigation of this accursed woman. The mischief was hers. She must be made to see her responsibility. Something must be done to restrict her potential mischievousness. Reasoning, persuasion.

No. It went deeper than that. The responsibility was partly his own. It was his own damned fault for ever having entertained the idea of taking a woman on board. Marx's fault! He leapt at the substitution, but couldn't accept it, for that implied that he himself had been influenced to a degree that suggested hypnotism.

"As a matter of fact," he thought, "I wasn't just my-

self in Naples. That was why I acted on this insane impulse. The change of destination; the feeling of being hawked about the Mediterranean. Elsie Tyrer——" Elsie Tyrer! After that fiasco he might at least have learnt the sense not to trust them. Never again! One always said that. Why in God's name hadn't he destroyed that miserable picture?

He paced the narrowness of his cabin. Beneath such heat a sane man would have sat still. Glancing sideways as he walked he suddenly perceived in the mirror a reflection of his own figure: a haggard face with sweat glistening in the wrinkles of its forehead, a drawn mouth, and, on the shoulder of the white jacket a smear of blood: Harvey's.

While he stood debating whether he should change the soiled jacket for fear of shocking his victim, another face appeared in the mirror, behind his shoulder. He gave a jump; for his confused mind identified these shadowy features with those of the Japanese artist's sketch, that phantasmal cunning evocation of lost desires whose imprint still persisted on its blurred background. Swiftly he focussed the apparition, and it became the face of Mrs. Salvia, who had stolen up softly and stood waiting outside the door in the dim alley-way. Thrown over her head, like a mantilla, Harvey's Assiut shawl concealed her hair and throat, detaching against its gauzy darkness the bloodless face that had shocked him by its devastating affinity with that ill-omened portrait. To discover that he was not, after all, the victim of a hallucination relieved him; but on the heels of this relief came the haunting question that his mistake implied: Was *this* the rea-

son . . . of everything? He heard a quiet tap at the door.

"Come in," he said without turning, and she entered.

"You wanted me?" she asked, her fingers still on the door-handle.

"Yes. Please close the door."

Why had he told her to do that, unless it were that he was anxious to isolate her from the setting in which that face had first appeared? A mistake. With an open door he would have been safer. He heard himself speaking harshly. "Please sit down."

She did so, having closed the door behind her. He faced her. Her eyes did not meet his; they were set upon the blood-smeared shoulder of his coat. She went paler and paler. These women! Had some uncanny instinct told her?

"A matter of discipline," he began, the ridiculous word forming itself without volition on his tongue. Her eyes blinked pitifully, as if, for certain, she knew what was coming. She moistened her lips as though an eager question only needed the voice that wouldn't come. His confidence suddenly returned.

"A matter of discipline that concerns you, Mrs. Salvia. I think I made it clear when you came on board, before you came on board, that your presence here must not interfere with the working of the ship. It was a private concession. You had no official status. You understand what I mean?"

The delayed answer came, almost inaudibly.

"Yes, I understood."

"Very well." He was getting on finely. "To-night I

find that you have been the cause, indirectly, perhaps, of dissension between two of my officers."

Now there was no doubt that she knew what was coming. She clasped her hands; the fingers of one went white with pressure; her eyes blinked with an awful fascination at that red stain. He saw that she was suffering, but this did not inspire him with pity now. However humble she might seem he wanted to hurt her; there was a smoulder of cruelty under his words.

"I must ask you to leave my officers alone," he said. "I don't know how far your intimacy with Mr. Harvey may have gone——"

The white throat reddened. He had succeeded. She rose to her feet suddenly.

"Captain Glanvil," she began. She was lost for other words, but now her eyes were set full on his. They were like blue ice; ice that can burn with coldness. His blood carried their shivering fire to his feet, to his ears, to his hands like a ripple of lightning. Without the contact of a finger-tip it was as though a closed current of anger rushed through them, as though, at any instant, the air between might crackle into a white flame. The tension was intolerable. Somehow he must break circuit.

"I beg your pardon," he said in a whisper. "Let us deal with the facts."

He knew that he had failed, his mind was still possessed and tingling; but he forced himself to go on, and was amazed at the calm with which his detached voice obeyed him.

"It seems that Mr. Cochran and Mr. Harvey had been discussing you. The second officer was not complimen-

tary, or, perhaps, too complimentary. The result was a scene that I can only consider as a disgrace to my command. I am asking for your help—you understand?—your help."

His words went weakly away from him. It seemed as if she didn't even hear them; and then, just as he felt that they were lost and must be repeated, she caught their meaning, and astonished him with an abrupt question:

"Nobody is hurt?"

His mind worked quickly; he was amazed at his own acuteness in realizing that if she had said: "Is *he* hurt?" he might have answered: "Who?" and driven her to a confession. That was what she would have said if she had been in love with Harvey. What could it matter to him whether she were in love with Harvey or not? He answered her.

"Fortunately, no. Not seriously, I mean."

But his hesitation had given her the opportunity for recovery that she needed. She seemed to pull her strength together, swaying slightly backward like a poised cobra; then, with the swiftness of a flicker of flame, she struck:

"What has this to do with me, Captain Glanvil?"

The unexpectedness of the question, the speed and energy with which it was launched at him, took him aback; he knew there was more behind it.

"To do with you?" he repeated. "That's pretty obvious, isn't it? You are the cause, the unconscious cause, perhaps. Let us be honest. Conscious or unconscious, this sort of situation doesn't arise without encouragement."

"I owe you a great deal, Captain Glanvil," she said

rapidly, "but there's no reason why my indebtedness should be taken out in insults. Now we stand square. As for these encouragements of yours—well, you can believe what you like. But I've done nothing—nothing! The second officer—I've hardly spoken to him—behaved like a brute to Gina. Mr. Harvey, who's the soul of chivalry, took my part. It was necessary that someone should."

She paused, breathless with the vehemence of her own scorn:

"Do you think it is easy for a woman to travel alone among a ship-full of men, particularly when she's had it hammered into her that she's an object of charity, an embarrassment, a nuisance, a danger? Do you think it's like going on a holiday, a pleasure trip; for change of air; free of charge? You don't. As a matter of fact, you don't think anything. You've never thought. You stand there on the bridge like God, wrapped up in your own self-sufficiency, and you watch your officers hanging round me. You think they're making love to me. They're not. They're just trying, poor souls, to get out of me a little of what they miss at sea; the things that belong to a woman, things that no other man can give them. And me giving, giving, giving, out of pity and because I must. And all the time that I'm sitting there sewing and talking and smiling under your jealous eyes—jealousy, that's what it really is—my mind—— Oh, one can't say it! I mean—I mean that every moment I know that I'm getting nearer, nearer, to the biggest crisis of my life, wondering——

"Nothing to you, of course. There's no reason why it

should be. And I *am* grateful to you; please forget what I said just now; but I've no time, no time for the things that seem to you so awfully important. *They're* nothing to me. I'm absorbed, like a gambler. Everything in my life depends on how my cards turn up at Panda. I'm fatalistic; Naples taught me that; but that doesn't lessen the excitement. Either I'm going to be happy—no, not that; I've forgotten long ago what happiness means—either I shall win, or else you might just as well throw me overboard to the sharks. I'm finished. Do you see?" She laughed dreadfully. "Finished."

On the last word her body was shaken by a sob; no sound passed her lips, but tears swamped her eyes. She tossed her head as they gathered on her cheek like rain. Glanvil gazed at her; he could not speak. The desperate energy of those clasped hands, of that agonized face, unmanned him. He had never before seen a human creature so transfigured, so fierily possessed. Her nearness scorched him. It was as if her body breathed out all the heat of the burnt sky and the unseen land. Her passion was a solvent within which his will and consciousness were consumed. A haze of heat or tears dimmed his sight, and through it gleamed palely the vision that had tortured him before, not by its beauty but by its challenge to some part of himself that he could neither know nor control, inevitable, unescapable, the face of the woman he loved.

The revelation staggered him with exultation and dread. Uplifted by an emotion that outsoared the limits of articulate speech he stretched out his hands. His fingers closed on the burning softness of her shoulders; they were

so fluent that their substance seemed to escape him, so submissive that she might have been asleep. Her eyes softened, their pupils dilated, they did not see him; but Glanvil's were fixed upon her closed lips. His mind was swept by a desire to press his mouth upon them; thus he might absorb her trouble into his strength and there would be peace; but as his lips approached her face she gave a sigh that was like a shudder and melted away from him. For an incalculable moment they stood solemnly gazing in each other's eyes, amazed and fearful. Then Glanvil stepped deliberately to the door and opened it. And she passed out.

With the deliberation of an automaton he returned to the desk and sat with his bursting head between his hands. The print of an open book flashed upon his retina words that were like a living voice which pierces the confusion of dreams:

In running for the anchorage of Panda, steer 270 *degrees true for the south point of Vumba Island until about one mile from it, when alter course to* 216 *degrees true, and water will gradually shoal to about three and a half fathoms when in line between the N.E. point of mainland (Ras Mazinga) and Ras Matunda, after which the water gradually deepens to six or seven fathoms. . . .*

CHAPTER THREE

I

WITHIN the land-locked anchorage of Panda, an hour before daybreak, darkness weighed dense and palpable as a cloud; a low cloud, ebbing seaward in the last breath of the night's down-river air, moving so stealthily that the casuarina trees, whose whole existence is one tremulous commotion, gave no shiver as it passed through their invisible tresses.

The water lay void and formless, part neither of earth nor sky, like some lake in a world scarcely created and innocent of life. The land drowsed, in a strained, conscious silence, for the moon, which had lately stirred the inhabitants of swamp and *shamba* into an uneasy life, had set; mute, exhausted, yet wary, it awaited the first signal of returning day.

Suddenly it came. From the flat shoals that fringed the island of Vumba a flight of flamingos took the air. Obedient to a secret, unanimous impulse, driven from their nocturnal pasture by some feather-sense of approaching dawn, they rose and hurried landward, ruffling the coverlet of darkness with their creaking wings, waking the hushed waters in their passage. They passed, and through the torn film of silence issued a watery sound, as

though the ripple of their emergence lapped the dumb roots of the mangroves. The casuarinas shuddered; the lofty plumes of the coconuts gave a dry shiver. A single bird, deep in the rubber plantations, set up a thin and plaintive piping: grasses stirred, then branches; a heavy body launched itself into the shallows with a sucking splash; and so, in an aggregation of echo on echo and restless sound on sound, the estuary awoke to a torrent of bird-song.

As yet there was no light: only a thinning in the darkness, that, drifting eastward, was curled back and lifted from the lip of the horizon. Gradually, quickened by light that came from some invisible source, the margin of water detached itself from the thickness of land. It lay like an irregular pool of spilt ink in which the miracle of creation was re-enacted; for, from its edges, rose fantastic shapes of earth and trees that were like monsters emerging from slime. Among these, huge against the steely levels of sea, loomed the whaleback of Vumba Island, closing the anchorage to eastward.

Moment by moment, as though the lines of the land were being boldly remodelled by the fingers of some celestial artist moving from that dark nucleus, the form of the neighbouring coast became defined. On the southerly side of the strait, the snout of the mainland, Ras M'zinga, thrust out like the upper jaw of a sleeping crocodile; on its extremity, a fantastic afterthought, rose the conical pillar of Vasco di Gama and the sinister bulk of the Fort of Jesus, threatening two seas. Gradually, on the flat concave of the promontory, a patch of smoky pallor resolved itself into the cubical masses of Panda

itself, old, grey, desolate; a town that had died in its sleep, if, indeed, it had ever lived.

So it seemed in that unkindly light; but as night rolled sullenly backward into the fastnesses of the delta, the face of the town became less ghastly. The sun rose. Through its narrow streets warmth flowed like a returning circulation, bringing colour into the blanched features of the houses, which now showed themselves plastered with pink stucco, roofed with red tiles and eyed with shuttered windows. A bell jangled violently within a church that was all façade, fronting the Avenida da Republica; white pigeons, scared from their roosts in the belfry, fluttered out like a drift of petals. Down the centre of an avenue a dog with a long curled tail dragged its hind-quarters to a patch of white sand on which sun gleamed between the pillars of the mangoes. He yawned, flapped his tail, rolled over to sleep. His day had begun. The bell ceased its jangle. Inside the church a priest had begun to say mass; but the door was closed as fast as those of the pink-washed houses with their shuttered windows, and his voice seemed a lonely and feeble protest against the somnolence of centuries.

Only on the northern edge of the town, where high garden walls ended and the sea began, the pulse of life visibly quickened. There, on the edge of the shining harbour, a breeze was steadily filling the plumes of the casuarinas with a sound of sea breaking on fine shingle and swaying the pendant air-roots of an avenue of ficus. Beneath their shadow a single native came running with long, lithe strides, scattering, as he passed, a group of white-breasted crows that pecked and trailed their feathers in the dust.

Panting, with open mouth, he turned the corner of the Avenida, and hammered at the door of one of the pink houses above which the royal arms of Portugal had been clumsily obliterated with a daub of whitewash. The door opened; another native, in a long white gown, to whom he imparted a message, appeared. Then, his day's work completed, he slunk away into the shade of the mangoes and threw himself down on the earth, still panting, within a few feet of the sleeping dog.

But from that moment Panda really awoke. All along the street shutters were opened and dark eyes peered vaguely through the iron grilles. The priest, in his long soutane, flapped over from the church like a shabby vulture, entering the house at which the messenger had knocked. A minute later, from the same floor, a figure in uniform importantly emerged. He passed along the avenue towards the sea, and behind him, at irregular intervals, the whole official population of Panda streamed downward to the shore of white sand on which boats were beached. They stood there, talking and gesticulating, pointing excitedly to the gleaming line of sea between Vumba Island and Ras M'zinga across which the bar that the early Portuguese had named Cavallos Marinhos showed a streak of broken water. Beyond it, stationary, as it seemed, in a lake of fire, the tall silhouette of a steamer was seen.

2

From the flying-bridge of the *Vega* Glanvil watched this landfall anxiously. Since sunset on the evening be-

fore his mind had been uneasy; for that coast with its barriers of islands and sunken coral was unknown to him, unlighted, and guarded by mysterious currents. Soon after midnight the stars had failed him. At a pace of less than five knots an hour he had crawled through the darkness, hoping that dead reckoning would bring him abeam of Vumba Island by dawn.

And so it did; but even then his troubles were not ended. From what the "Africa Pilot" told him it seemed doubtful if a steamer of the *Vega's* size, drawing sixteen foot astern, had ever entered the harbour of Panda before. At low water he would only have a third of a fathom to spare; and since the survey was an old one and the form of shoals, on a coast so swept by hurricanes, variable, he decided that it would be wiser to navigate by sight rather than by faith, and not to attempt a passage until the sun rose astern and showed him a way shading the shallows like a map with coloured contours. Then, with the lead kept going, and his hands on the wheel, he might approach with confidence.

But in spite of his anxiety for the safety of his ship, the distant prospect of Panda came to Glanvil as a relief. Cochran and Harvey had both emerged from their combat without serious hurt; but the fight had shown him what a dangerous piece of cargo Mrs. Salvia was to his inflammable crew. In a few hours he would be rid of her. Then, perhaps, the spirit of discipline, without which the command of a ship became impossible, would return.

Such was the official explanation of his feelings, but beneath it he consciously suppressed an even deeper anxi-

ety for the discipline of his own body and soul. The scene in his closed cabin, two nights before, had shattered his faith in himself, confirming, with the malice of a diabolical advocate, the doubts that had undermined his sense of security in Naples. During the day that followed, in which the *Vega* steamed slowly southward past Zanzibar, these doubts had crystallized the case against him, calling to mind a body of damning and irrefutable evidence, explaining, by the worst of motives, his original impulse to accept Mrs. Salvia's passage, his awkwardness in her presence, his jealousy of the innocent Harvey and the deliberate cruelty he had shown her on the night before. The more he protested, the more surely his conscience convinced him that, from the very first, he had been urged by the basest of passions; that he was in love with the wife of the incalculable Salvia, and that his shame must have been apparent to everyone on board but himself.

All through the night the accuser vexed him. It was not until he saw the pillar of di Gama smitten with dawn, and, beyond it, the walls of Panda gleaming like opals in their casket of velvety and too-violent green, that the certainty of an abrupt and final escape from her and from himself consoled him.

With a sense of unmeasurable relief he pulled the lever of the telegraph to *Stand by!* heard the great bearings rumble, and felt the *Vega* answer to his wheel. In that relief the harbour of Panda was transfigured, his mind exalted with a sensation of restored power. He and his ship were one again; from her might of steam and steel he drew a transfusion of strength. So, slowly, with the

stately motion of a great bird floating homeward, they passed over the ruffles of the bar, the deepening green of the shallows, into the estuary's glittering peace, and hung, with stopped engines, in seven fathoms of water two cable-lengths from shore.

It was over. The feeling of escape and mastery so filled him that he was only dimly aware of an angry voice bawling through a megaphone from one of the swarm of boats that skimmed the surface like water-spiders on the *Vega's* beam.

"Portuguese flag, sir. Hoist the Portuguese flag!"

He turned to Cochran, who was standing alert beside him.

"Mr. Cochran, tell the chief officer to put up the Portuguese flag at once."

"Can't be done, sir. We've only got the old one."

"Portuguese flag!" bellowed the megaphone.

"These Dagos," Cochran muttered, "changing their colours every other year."

"You cannot enter this port without the flag," the megaphone shrieked. "You cannot anchor here."

A whistle shrilled. With a thunderous rumble the anchor went down.

"Can't we!" said Cochran, with a chuckle.

In a moment an excited figure in uniform had swung up a rope ladder for'ard and appeared on the bridge.

"I am the governor of this place," he spluttered. "I am the port authority. I am the police. You have not hoist the Portuguese flag. It is international. Have you not read the regulations?"

"I'm sorry it can't be done, sir," Glanvil told him, with

the scornful politeness that his gesticulations inspired. "We don't possess the flag of the Portuguese Republic. If you recognize the old one I'll give orders for it to be hoisted."

"The old one?" The governor shook his head. "To recognize the old one would be equivalent to a revolution."

"In that case we'd better go down to the saloon," said Glanvil.

Puffed like an angry sparrow, the official followed him. Glanvil gave him a seat and offered him whisky, which he accepted without thanks.

"As you see, it is international," he repeated, scratching his unshaven chin. "A difficult point. I do not see what can be done. Unless . . ." a sudden inspiration made his eyes goggle. "Unless I hire you one. That can be arranged." Glanvil shook his head, with a wry smile. The whisky had begun its tranquillizing duty. The governor relented. "But another time . . ." he began.

"I hope there won't be another time," Glanvil answered grimly. He raised his glass. "Your very good health, sir," he said.

The governor lit a cigar and found that it was good.

"It is the case of an ally, our oldest ally," he murmured. "I permit a dispensation. We dispense with formalities. You may anchor without fear."

As a symbol of this concession he grasped Glanvil's hand suddenly and wrung it.

"My name is Cardozo. An illustrious name. You are consigned to Almeida? I know it. I understand. I have nothing with Almeida to do. Nothing." He leaned

forward, cocking the toe of his right boot into the hollow of his left knee. It was an apish gesture. "Listen," he said, "I know Almeida. Almeida is clever, no mistake, but Almeida sails a little too close to the wind. I am the law. I am the military. I warn you; for Almeida can handle dirty business and you may also very well find yourself up to the neck before you know. The slave trade is abolished, how many years? Eh! Ask Almeida. Ha! But wait, wait, wait." He wagged his finger with a languid oscillation. "Listen . . ."

But Glanvil would not listen any longer. Almeida might be all of the unutterable things that Cardozo suggested; but that didn't alter the fact that the *Vega's* cargo was consigned to him and that time was being wasted. It was obvious that the port authority preferred its whisky to the papers which Glanvil now pushed toward him.

"To-morrow," he said airily. "To-morrow. In the case of friends there is a dispensation. Listen. If I have made it clear about that Almeida. . . . Unofficially . . ."

"I must trouble you," Glanvil protested, "to be official. We are still flying the yellow flag. I've a clean bill of health and I want *pratique*."

"Forgive me," said Cardozo benevolently; "the doctor is taking a cure at one of the railway camps. For the time being I am the sanitary authority. *Pratique* is granted. To bring disease to Panda is to bring coals to Cardiff. As for the doctor's official fee"—he took a swift glance at the negation in Glanvil's eyes—"that, of course, does not arise. But I incommode you?"

This interview had already got the better of Glanvil's

sense of humour, partly because he realized that the farce in which he found himself a protagonist was being acted before a large audience which filled the mouth of the saloon doorway and trailed down the alley-way outside it like a queue at a turnstile. No doubt an awe of Cardozo's uniform held the crowd in check; but it seemed possible that the maligned Almeida, with whom he was anxious to establish contact, was wedged somewhere in the middle of it. Poor luck for Almeida if he were! Glanvil handled the situation with a cynicism that seemed proper to the place. He called for the chief steward.

"Mr. Rennels, will you please see that this gentleman has all he wants?" Cardozo smiled affectionately. "I must ask you to excuse me," Glanvil continued; "it is important that I should get into touch immediately with my agents." He approached the door. "Is Mr. Almeida there?" he called. "Mr. Almeida?"

An echo ran back through the crowd, dying at the end of the alley-way in whispers: "Almeida . . . Almeida . . . Almeida. In the hush that followed an energetic body propelled itself through the narrow passage until the whole of the doorway was occupied by a black ball of a man clothed in pyjamas, a frock coat and a pig-sticker topee beneath which appeared a pair of dark eyes, blinking through celluloid spectacles, a clipped, grey moustache, and an enormous, good-humoured mouth. In this face appeared none of the villainy that the governor had suggested, nor did it promise the efficiency that Marx had foretold; and yet, after that fantastic interview with Cardozo, now happily immersed in his fourth glassful of whisky, it seemed at least friendly and unpretentious.

"You'd better come with me into my cabin," said Glanvil, and the figure, with an abrupt and unacknowledged bob to the governor, followed him. Glanvil closed the door behind them, pointing to a seat which the other refused.

"Now, sir," he said, "you are Mr. Almeida?"

The apparition bowed. He produced a sheaf of cards from his pocket, selected one with a flourish and presented it to Glanvil. It was printed in four languages—German, Italian, Portuguese and English. He stood back smiling as Glanvil stared in amazement at the last.

BOMBA

THE GENERAL SYMPATHETIC UNDERTAKER BUILDER FOR THE LIVING AND THE DEAD CONTRACTOR ETC.

REFUGE AND REFRESHING BUNGALOW, 52 AVENIDA DA REPUBLICA, PANDA.

READY-MADE COFFIN SUPPLIED WITH HEARS AND UNIFORMED MEN AT ANY MOMENT CORPSE WASHED AND DRESSED READY MADE HAMMOCK ALWAYS IN STOCK FOR SALE.

TRUCKS, VENETIAN BLINDS, ETC., ALL REPAIRS MADE AND PAYMENT AFTER SATISFACTION.

AND I'LL BURY YOUR DEAD BY EASY SYSTEM ONLY BE HONEST TO OUR SYMPATHETIC LAST FRIEND

BOMBA'S ADVICE,—DO NOT LIVE LIKE A FOOL AND DIE LIKE A BIG FOOL. EAT AND DRINK PAY ALL YOUR HONEST DEBTS—THAT'S GENTLEMEN.

ALWAYS BÊ PRAYING FOR A HAPPY DEATH THEN A DECENT COFFIN BY BOMBA.

WILL BURY THE DEAD BOOK OF TOBIAS I'LL FEED THE LIVING, THAT'S BOMBA.

CONTRACTS TAKEN FOR CARPENTRY, MASONRY, PAINTING, TOMBSTONES ETC. AT MODERATE CHARGES.

BIMBO BOMBA ALIAS FERNANDO SOUZA

While Glanvil read this astonishing production its owner's lips moved silently as if shaping the words of which it was composed. Looking up from the print, Glanvil caught them pursed in the rapture of their final explosion: *Bimbo Bomba.* For the moment he was too entertained to be angry.

"So you are not Almeida," he said.

The creature shook his head with a gentle melancholy.

"Then who the devil are you?"

"You have not read the card? No? I am Bomba, captain; your best friend. Captain, best friend you got in this goddam port. Almeida . . . !" His lips fell, his nostrils wrinkled with disgust as though the very name stank in them. "You and me make business, captain, big business. What you want, I got it." He smacked his hands in triumph. "I got it!" he screamed. "Everybody know Bomba. You ask the governor."

Evidently the governor was in it. Glanvil remembered the salutation that had passed between him and his visitor and the same anxiety to discredit Almeida. As for this fellow, he was evidently some shady kind of Goanese

comprador whose business was with the chief steward. It seemed as if the whole port had concentrated on a conspiracy to waste his time and fret his threadbare temper. A sudden gust of irritation took him; with difficulty he controlled his voice.

"Get out of this," he said. "Get out, double quick, and don't let me see you aboard this ship again!"

Bomba raised his hands and his moist eyes in protest. "Your best friend, captain—sympathetic last friend. When you have been here a week you understand. Fifty-two, Avenida da Republica. Fifty-two. You remember? Same number as a pack of cards."

Glanvil threw open the door; he laid his hand on Bomba's shoulder; in its pressure there was a hint of hidden propulsive force before which he found it wise to yield. Tactfully he melted away into the alley-way, and Glanvil, hot in his determination to run Almeida to earth, would have followed him if he had not suddenly found himself face to face with Mrs. Salvia, who stood mutely before him and would not allow him to pass.

"You want me?" he said irritably. "I'm sorry; it's impossible. I can't speak with you now."

"You are going ashore?" she asked, unruffled by his haste.

"At once. When I come back I can put myself at your service. If you want to go ashore yourself, you had better ask the chief officer. He will help you."

She shook her head. In her hand she held a packet of old letters to which she seemed to be looking for inspiration; but words would not come; only her sad eyes begged him to be patient.

"Before you go . . . if you could spare me one moment," she said at last.

Damn the woman! But if the tragic modulations of her voice were not affected he had no right, no power to refuse her. In any case she need not look for a repetition of their last passionate interview. He had put all that resolutely behind him; he was safe, and therefore could afford to be generous.

"Come in," he said shortly. "Sit down. What is it?"

She gave a sigh of relief and sat down on the locker. Glanvil stood with his back to her, nervously rearranging the papers that Cardozo had rejected. He heard behind him the sound of a choking sob that made him shiver with an emotion that was half pain, and half anger that he should have felt it. After a moment of uncertainty she regained her equilibrium and spoke in a voice that was a triumph of rigidity:

"Captain Glanvil, I told you the other night that I had a great deal at stake in coming to Panda. I don't know whether Mr. Marx let you know that my husband was employed by your agents here—Almeida's. It's seven years since I've seen him. That's a long time. In seven years people can change. And now that I've got here—thanks to you—please don't imagine that I forget that—I feel ridiculously . . . there's no other word for it . . . frightened. I feel as if I can't face it without knowing, without being a little more certain . . ."

Her voice faltered so pitifully that he felt he must help her out. He knew that his harshness was an affectation, and compelled himself to be natural.

"But Mr. Marx gave me to understand," he said, "that

your husband had written repeatedly asking you to join him here. Isn't that so?"

"Yes, yes," she answered eagerly. "Here are all his letters. They're written in Italian, so I'm afraid you couldn't understand them."

"Well, well, then," he encouraged her; it was just as if he were trying to coax a child out of some unreasonable fear. "I really don't see why you should be frightened, or what you want to be more certain of."

"That he really wants me." Her voice broke on the words.

"But my dear Mrs. Salvia," he smiled, "surely if you were as uncertain as all that you'd never have come. Of course you're a little nervous, but honestly . . ."

"No, no," she broke in, "you don't understand. There was no choice. I *had* to come. In fairness to Gina and myself I couldn't go on living like that. I had to settle it one way or another. Last night, when you slowed down, I couldn't help thinking what a blessing it would be if you'd hit something in the dark and we'd been drowned. Then it would have been settled."

"We should all have been settled," he laughed.

"I know, I know . . . I didn't mean that. It was an awful thing to think. I just felt I must tell you. It might help you to see. Haven't you ever felt that it would be kind and merciful if something just came suddenly and blotted out everything? No more anxiety? But, of course, you haven't. You're sane, and I suppose I'm not. What's more, I'm wasting your time."

It was true; but the blank misery of her soul, and, even more, the appeal of her physical presence, which had re-

gained all its power in this new intimacy, compelled him to deny it. It was inconceivable that Salvia should not want her; and this interview, after all, was the last.

"Tell me what you wish me to do," he said. "Anything that's in my power shall be done."

"I knew you would say that," she told him, in the same low voice. It was more, he reflected suddenly, than he had known himself. "I want you to see Almeida—I can trust you to be tactful—just to find out, if you possibly can, how the land lies. Then I shall know the worst or the best. If, in the meantime, you can allow Gina and me to stay aboard here . . ."

"Of course, you can stay here," he replied hurriedly.

"Thank you."

The simplicity of the word intoxicated him; and yet his cautious mind reached far ahead of it. "But if," he said slowly, "it should be the worst?"

"Oh, God, don't speak of it!" she whispered.

Her terror shamed him. Shocked at a cruelty of which he couldn't believe himself capable, he recoiled into an equally incredible, dumb tenderness. Her whisper brought him back, helpless, to the parting, two nights before, the moment when she had melted away from his arms. His brain was red with hatred for the unknown Salvia and with desire. By an effort that scorched his will he mastered the flames of both.

"Forgive me," he said. "I will see Almeida. I'll do everything that I can."

"Yes," she murmured.

He picked up his papers and left her.

It was possible that the absent Almeida issued his or-

ders telepathically; nothing less could explain the violent activity which now showed itself on the *Vega's* decks. Already the hatch-covers were off, the derricks lifted, the winches rattling and spinning. The stevedores of Panda were evidently of the nature of low-compression engines whose power increases as their cylinders become warmed; for now that the sun, its rays reflected in the still water, attained a fury of concentration, the full energy of the port came into play.

From unsuspected creeks and beaches a fleet of *dhows,* their wings of matting bellied in the up-river breeze, converged upon the *Vega,* tacking and weathering, like birds of prey uncertain whether their appointed victim still had strength to fight. In that lost harbour every type of *dhow* seemed to have been concentrated as in a museum: *Bagalas,* with high poops and projecting prows; *M'tepes* of Lamu, sharp-sterned, square-sailed, with camels' heads at the prow; *Betelas* of Zanzibar, square-sterned, low-pooped; all were there, and, aboard them, swarmed, shouted and slept black men with every variety of feature from the thick lips of the negro to the fine lines of the Arab's nose and mouth. A curious air of ease and happiness that contrasted ironically with Glanvil's stormy presence possessed them all. This, it seemed, was a place in which life flowered and fruited in such profusion that the individual's struggle for survival became a matter of no importance. Men were like flowers, contented with their hour of sunshine, asking nothing more; their life one vast canvas lighted by such overwhelming brilliance that no values remained. It was annihilating; it was encouraging.

About the foot of the gangway a dozen dug-outs and dinghies clustered. In one of them sprawled three rowers whose blue jerseys made an attempt at uniform. On the back of one of these jerseys, in frayed red wool, Glanvil deciphered the letters AIMFIDA, and jumped at ALMEIDA. Knowing not one word of Swahili, he stepped aboard her. The boatmen fell to their oars and pulled him over the blinding water towards the shore. Here, in obedience to repetitions of the word Almeida, the chief of the boatmen handed him over to a loafer who lay gnawing the stringy stone of a green mango as big as a coconut, and in the company of this guide Glanvil passed through the ficus avenue in search of the agent's office.

At this hour and on such a day the least shade was grateful. Beneath the moist dome of his topee, Glanvil's skin pricked and smarted. The mangoes of the Avenida received him. Never was so heavy a green so shadeless; his feet burned upon a coral roadway whose whiteness scorched his eyes. He hoped the fellow knew where he was taking him, and doubted it. Faith failing him, he called on the guide to stop and doubled back on the avenue's only ornament, a kiosque of blistered iron that had just let down its windows, disclosing black bottles of Portuguese wine and a complete spectrum of highly coloured but anonymous liqueurs. To the curly-headed boy in charge of it he murmured the word Almeida, pointing in the direction from which he had returned, and received in answer a series of violent nods and new instructions to his guide.

It suddenly struck him as curious that none of Almeida's papers had supplied him with a detailed address.

Perhaps, in a place so small as Panda, details were hardly necessary. Still following the line of the avenue, cursing the heat and reflecting how inevitably the foreign sailor was at the mercy of all ruffians ashore, he reached, at last, a building that seemed newer than all the others he had seen. It was of galvanized iron and had the appearance of some chapel of ease in an industrial suburb perverted to secular uses. Half of it appeared to be a store, the other half a drinking shop; on the narrow veranda, six inches above the roadway, were set a dozen flimsy bamboo tables, each with a carafe of water. Evidently there was some mistake. He turned on his guide, repeating the word Almeida, receiving nothing but a smile in return.

Perplexed and irritated, he mounted the veranda and had barely perceived the number 52 nailed above the doorway when he saw advancing toward him the unwelcome figure of Bomba. Bomba had taken off his topee, revealing a close-cropped, iron-grey head. He stood blinking upward with narrowed eyes, the same good-humoured smile on his thick lips. His reappearance snapped the last heat-frayed threads of Glanvil's control.

"Are you responsible for this monkeying?" he cried. "This is the second time I've asked for Mr. Almeida and found you. You'd better explain."

"Eh! Everybody knows Almeida," said the little man with a friendly grin. "You come inside for a cool drink, no? Everything you want I got, that's gentlemen! Everybody knows Almeida."

"Then if everybody knows him, please send someone with me to show me his house."

"*Cer*—tainly, *cer*—tainly," Bomba purred. "Then we do business later. Yes?"

He clapped his hands and a tall, white-robed Swahili appeared to whom he babbled a string of incomprehensible words. "*Cer*—tainly, *cer*—tainly!" he sang. "When you have seen Mr. Almeida you come back again?"

But Glanvil did not wait to answer him. Back he tramped along the brilliant white-hot roadway, past the kiosque to the seaward end of the Avenida, where Bomba's boy left him outside a ponderous doorway carved in arabesque and decorated with polished brass nails. No name; no number; only in its midst a heavy wrought-iron knocker with which he hammered impatiently.

A servant, who might have been the brother of Bomba's, opened to him. This time he kept the name of Almeida to himself. Someone, at any rate, was expected, for the man immediately let him through a long passage that smelt like a cellar into a square *patio*. Over the pavement of this sunken courtyard, an irregular mosaic of broken Persian tiles, the native passed silently. Glanvil followed with echoing footsteps. Over his head a thick trellis of foliage defied the sun. Here, in obedience to a signal, he waited.

In the midst of the *patio* the white and yellow trumpets of a bush frangipani emitted a nocturnal perfume, and about them, mistaking the greeny gloom for twilight, a gigantic hawk-moth silently quivered, thrusting its slender uncurled proboscis into the flowers' throats. Ghostly, in an air faint with sweetness, the creature went about its task of impregnation, and Glanvil watched it, with held

breath, as in the presence of a sacrament. It was so quiet that he could almost feel the shudder of delight with which each flower received its visitant. The sight moved him strangely, unaccountably; he was so hypnotized that when the barefooted Swahili returned and beckoned to him he recovered himself with a start.

Again he followed, and entered, at last, a square room with a high ceiling on the further side of the courtyard. His eyes had been prepared for darkness by the green ante-chamber; but this room was so dark that he could have believed it empty until a white shape in front of him revealed itself as a four-poster bed, shrouded in mosquito-netting like a *catafalque*. From the interior of this gauzy cage a voice bade him good morning.

"You are the captain of the *Vega?*" it said. "Please take a seat. I am Almeida."

An Almeida that was only voice seemed better than no Almeida, but more astonishing to Glanvil than the purity of the English in which this greeting reached him was the melodious quality of the voice itself; in its soft and honeyed richness it seemed to have some affinity with the atmosphere of the *patio*.

"Yes; I brought the *Vega* in this morning," he replied. "My name is Glanvil."

"Glanvil," the voice repeated, investing the word with an unfamiliar beauty. "Glanvil. Ah . . ."

By this time Glanvil's eyes had succeeded in discerning through the haze of mosquito curtain the shape of Almeida's body. He was very tall, certainly more than six feet; for his toes tented the sheet at the extreme end of the bed where Glanvil was sitting, and the reach of his

arms, which lay outside the coverlet, would have made a boxer envious. His shoulders were propped upon a mass of pillows hardly whiter than his face. A face blanched with darkness. Something in it gave Glanvil a thrill of puzzled recognition. He had seen it before, and not so long ago. Where? Suddenly his memory carried him back to the museum at Naples in whose sepulchral corridors he had sought refuge from the obsession of another face. He saw himself walking wildly down an alley of marble emperors, and realized that the stony pallor, the chiselled perfection of their features, was reproduced in those of Almeida. The man lay there motionless, like a tall statue fallen; only his voice was warm and living.

"As you may guess," he said, "I am a sick man; but that does not prevent my attending to business. I hear that you came in at dawn. I hope you were well received?"

"When I left the ship," Glanvil told him, "they had started discharging the cargo."

"Good. You had no trouble with officials?"

"Scarcely trouble." Glanvil told him of Cardozo's antics, of Bomba's intrusion, and of the way in which he had been misdirected ashore. Almeida listened keenly, punctuating the story with an occasional mellifluous "Yes."

"You have complied with all the port regulations?" he said at last.

"The governor, or whatever he calls himself, refused to look at my papers. He was most polite."

"Exactly. Within the next three hours you must see that everything is in order. This is important. If you

don't see to it Cardozo's politeness may land you in difficulties. A wire from Mozambique and you may find yourself arrested. That will give me trouble. You may have gathered from Cardozo's attitude that he is hostile to me?"

"I did. He began talking about you, but I had no time to listen to him."

"A pity. It would have been instructive. Ears are more useful than eyes. Cardozo is no friend of mine. It will amuse you to know, Captain Glanvil, that I have no friends. It amuses *me*. Not too much, though. My strength is limited; I know exactly how much amusement I can stand without danger. Let us waste no more energy. You have nothing to do with our feuds; all that I want from you is that you should clear the cargo that Mr. Marx has sent. After that, I think, your charter ends. Your owners will leave the matter of cargo homeward to your discretion?"

"That's the arrangement," Glanvil told him.

"Then we shall see. As a precaution, be scrupulously observant of legal formalities. In lawless places law has a way of being inconvenient. Otherwise you need fear nothing."

"I don't," said Glanvil. He had no patience with this air of melodrama. He disliked and distrusted the *décor* of the darkened room, the shrouded four-poster, the oversweet voice of Almeida issuing like that of an oracle from a marble mask. Such things might easily inspire a savage, or even a civilized man unable to escape from the steamy delta of Panda, with awe; but to himself,

newly come from Europe and the clean sea, such shades of terror were no more impressive than those of dragon-shaped animalculæ breeding in a bottle of foul water. Almeida, with all his mysteries, seemed as unreal and harmless as Bomba or Cardozo. He refused to take them seriously.

His duty was plain enough: simply to discharge his cargo, to pick up another and to go. No, it was not quite so simple as that. He had forgotten Mrs. Salvia and a promise that must be fulfilled. At this point he found himself listening once more to Almeida's voice.

"Unless you deliberately court it," he was saying, "you need have no further trouble with Cardozo or his party. Your landing this morning was an experiment. In future I shall see that you are protected. In any difficulty you will deal with me direct. I do not delegate my authority. All your papers will be dealt with here. I don't think there is any more to be said, so now I'll wish you good morning."

Mechanically Glanvil rose. The suggestion was so compelling that he had almost forgotten the second part of his errand.

"Before I go," he said, "I want to ask you about a man named Salvia. I believe he is in your employment."

"No; he is no longer employed by me," Almeida answered smoothly. "What do you want to know about him?"

"Your correspondent, Mr. Marx, approached us in Naples on behalf of his wife. He told me a distressing story that induced us to bring her along as a passenger.

I don't know any details, but it seems that she is rather afraid of meeting her husband. I hoped you would be able to give me some information or advice."

"I can give you no information. Salvia was sent to me from my house in Mogadishu. He was unsatisfactory, so I discharged him. As for advice, I can only urge you to take her back again."

Glanvil laughed. "You're not very helpful, Mr. Almeida," he said.

"I have no intention of helping you."

"In that case I had better go to your friend Cardozo?"

"As far as I am concerned, Captain Glanvil, you can go to hell."

The sweet persuasiveness of the tone in which they were uttered only aggravated the insolence of Almeida's words and the anger that swept through Glanvil's mind. Before this he had merely regarded Almeida with distaste; now he felt that the man's mind was as devilish as his prone body was obscene. Under any ordinary circumstances he could have dealt with such a gratuitous insult in his own fashion; but neither this man nor his surrounding were ordinary. One might as well use physical or verbal violence against the phantoms of a nightmare. He steadied himself.

"In that case there is nothing to be said," he replied.

Almeida made no answer, and without another word Glanvil left him, hurrying through the scented *patio* and the dim corridor into the street, hearing, as he stood on the threshold outside, the sound of a grating lock shot home.

Full of frustration and hate he turned his steps again

in the direction of Bomba's store. By this time the blistering din of cicalas in the trees was like water hissing on a hot plate; a dazzling sunlight danced from the coral road, bleaching, with white intensity, every colour in the scene.

So pure a stream of daylight, Glanvil reflected, should surely flush the twilit influences of Almeida's house from his mind. Now he would be able to see things in proportion, to forget his anger, to judge Almeida's unthinkable outburst reasonably. But he could not reason; the sun was in his brain, heating his confused hatred to a point of ebullition. And, what was more, the atmosphere of Almeida went with him. The tones of Almeida's voice echoed still in his ears. No wonder the people of Panda hated him; the man had a faculty of making himself an obsession. It was ludicrous.

Walking along, forgetful of his surroundings, he compelled himself to find a reason for Almeida's outburst, even if he could not fathom the cause of its continued effect on himself. It was easy to write it down as the irritation of a man made weak by illness, and therefore to be pitied. This explanation would not hold; for the one thing certain about Almeida was his enormous strength of mind.

Strength of body, too, he must once have had. The form beneath the sheet was that of a man of heroic stature and mould. As for pity . . . no sentiment could have been more wasted. Pity, perhaps, for the antics of his enemies, Bomba and Cardozo, whose pathetic slanders and machinations were like the struggles of flies kicking at the strands that radiated from the close-spun centre of Almeida's mosquito net; strands that carried the vibra-

tions of that watchful intelligence from all the ports in which it did business—Mogadishu, Massowah, Ibo, Pembeni, places more moribund than Panda itself; strands that touched Europe in the office of Marx and Esposito and penetrated God knows what recesses of African darkness. "I do not delegate authority," he had said.

Still baffled by the mystery of Almeida's vindictiveness, Glanvil approached Bomba's Refuge and Refreshing Bungalow. During the hour that he had spent in his visit to Almeida the place had awakened. The veranda was packed with drinkers whose speech and gesticulations proclaimed them Latins, or, as Hendry would have called them, Dagoes. No doubt they were workers on the unfinished railway for whom the *Vega's* cargo of "luxuries" was intended. Their faces, even as Glanvil saw them, excited with alcohol, showed the drawn pallor of malarial saturation.

Inside the Refuge, where Bomba himself stood peering and smiling, a mechanical piano tinkled the refrain of a song that had once been comic, stumbling over the notes like a drunken man. When he caught sight of him, Bomba hurried forward. Ruthlessly dislodging one of his customers, he offered Glanvil a chair.

"Sit down, captain; sit down, gentleman. You found Mr. Almeida. Yes?"

That "yes" was pregnant with a curiosity which Glanvil grimly left unsatisfied. Refusing the drink that was offered him, he came quickly to the point, asking for information about Salvia.

"Ah, Salvia, the poor Salvia," Bomba replied, with a melancholy headshake. "There you see what a man Al-

meida is! Salvia is not the first, captain, not the first, gentleman. Yes. That Salvia came down from . . . Massowah, was it? Good business he done there for Almeida. A handsome young man, that Salvia." He screwed up his eyes. "You know Almeida not like women? Ha-ha! Handsome, captain. Italian. Almeida always like the Italians."

Glanvil interrupted him with a question by which he had been troubled all morning. What was Almeida himself?

"Almeida is not like the rest of us, captain. Oh, no. Mr. Almeida is not a man. Some kind of devil, the niggers think. The priests say it was God that struck him down. They cross themselves when they pass his house."

"I mean his nationality."

"The devil is all nations. I am good Christian, captain. No? Almeida speaks all language like a damned Jew. They say his mother was English, like you and me."

"And Salvia? What happened?"

"Salvia has the taste for women. Well, captain, we are all men. And that was enough for Almeida. *Bas* . . . finish! All up with Salvia. I am an honest man, I feed the living and bury by easy system, Book of Tobias, that's Bomba. I'm general sympathetic undertaker and last friend, captain, but how can I give drink on credit to man when his money is finished? Pay your honest debts. That's business."

"You mean that Salvia has no money? How does he live?"

Bomba raised his hands in a gesture of helplessness.

"How can I tell? Who can do business with a man who has to do with Almeida? He live somewhere out there by the swamp," he pointed vaguely, "in a *banda* that he has built. Nobody go there except the niggers."

"Can you show me the way?" Glanvil asked.

"Show the way, captain? Certainly. *Cer*—tainly. You want to see Mr. Salvia?" His eyes blinked craftily. "Perhaps you bring the poor man money to pay his honest debts. No? I will send the boy with you at once." He clapped his hands.

But by this time Glanvil had had enough of Panda. Dizzy with heat, maddened by the piano which had kept on tinkling as though it were in the grip of a delirium, his only desire was to escape to the comparative quiet and sanity of his ship. As he rose Bomba held his arm, whispering in his grotesque dialect something about business, good business, copra. He didn't listen. Murmuring: "Not to-day . . . to-morrow, perhaps," he freed himself and plunged once more into the fiery heat of the roadway, hurrying down the mango avenue toward the sea, seeing nothing until he reached the level of Almeida's house.

There it stood, four-square and massive as a prison, no opening on the ground floor but the brass-studded door through which he had entered, and, above, a line of windows shuttered behind their iron grilles. The very sunshine made it seem more secret and sinister. Try as he might he felt a wave of gooseflesh passing over his skin. And he, as he told himself, was a normal and reasonable man. No wonder the priests crossed themselves as they passed it! Nor did this strange discomfort leave him until

he was half-way across the sparkling water that separated him from the *Vega's* gangway.

3

He had half expected to be met by Mrs. Salvia's questioning eyes. The sight of her chair standing empty relieved him. From the bridge-deck he heard laughter; Gina, whose dark hair and pigmented skin gave her immunity from the effects of heat, was playing boisterously with her late enemy, Cochran. As Glanvil crossed the deck the second caught his eye. He stood there in his shirt-sleeves, his hairy arm clasped round the child's waist, and smiled down with a look of bashful triumph. It was a pity, Glanvil thought, that the little monkey hadn't got over her coquetry before, sparing him the embarrassment of that ridiculous dispute and the scene that followed it. He waved his hand, but seeing his solemn face she became dumb and crept closer to the triumphant Cochran as if she sought refuge from his severity. "Poor little rat!" he thought, for in that moment the picture of Salvia which had emerged from Bomba's confused dialect returned to him, throwing on Gina's ignorance a sentimental light.

For the present such indulgences were dangerous; one should not take liberties when one's head was splitting with heat. What he wanted was a long, cool drink and half an hour's sleep in which he might forget Panda and everywhere about it.

He rang his bell. Ah Qui appeared, his face sweating

like a yellow cheese; and then, having satisfied his drought with a tall glassful of lemon and soda-water, Glanvil drew the blinds and threw himself on his bunk. There, at last, he closed his burning eyes, listening drowsily to the rumour of talk that reached him from the further end of the partition, where in his absence Hendry and Cheadle sat over the remains of tiffin. It was only now and then that he guessed the import of what they were saying, nor did he wish to know until, of a sudden, he caught the word Almeida and strained his ears to listen.

"Something like the evil eye," Hendry was saying. The rest of his sentence died away. "Don't you believe it," Cheadle replied, with all the fervour of the conventicle in his voice. "Don't you credit it. If you believe in a just and living God, as we all do, Hendry, you can't believe in that."

"What about the witch of Endor, eh?"

"Witch of Endor! That was before the coming of our Lord. Well, I think I'll be getting my forty winks. I see the lady's still on board. Her husband don't seem in much hurry to get her off. If I had *my* way . . ."

Their voices died away as they left the saloon, and Glanvil, lying flat on the warm compress of his sheets, fell into a doze that was neither deep enough for rest nor too deep for dreaming. He dreamed that he was following Bomba in search of Salvia. Bomba, for all his fatness, went so fast that Glanvil could not keep pace with him. A peculiar dimness overhung the world; it was as though he saw it all through smoked glasses, and the swamp through which they passed—Bomba had told him

it was a swamp—was unlike any landscape he had seen before, dominated by tree-ferns with huge fronds and conifers armed with spined plates like the scales of reptiles. Darker and darker it grew. No sun could pierce such a steamy mist as that. His lungs panted for dry air; his eyes craved light. He fancied that he had made a great discovery, that he had penetrated some secret place islanded in time, where the conditions of life must be those of a lost geological epoch; that there he would find Salvia, not in the shape of a man, but as some fleshy vegetable growth, with bright carnivorous blossoms and coiling tendrils, whose strength and beauty were a sign of the place's stupendous fertility. He would recognize Salvia at once. No doubt of that.

It grew darker. Bomba had disappeared. In place of steam and sap he smelt whitewash, and then a gust of perfume. He heard his footsteps echoing and realized that, of a sudden, he had entered Almeida's great *patio,* where the trumpets of frangipani breathed out their heavy sweetness. A piece of damnable trickery! How had the little Goanese lured him there? It seemed as if one could never go where one wanted in Panda. Almeida should be told about it. This time no mistake!

He knew his way. He walked straight into the bedroom and called Almeida's name. He approached the mosquito curtains. Almeida was lying as he had left him, his eyes wide open staring in front of him, out of that marble mask. Glanvil lifted the netting determined if he didn't answer, to pull him out of bed. He grasped the arm that lay along the sheet. It was as cold as stone.

Its coldness froze his heart, for he knew that Almeida was dead. In the silence that followed he heard a faint metallic tinkle, and woke, drenched with cold sweat.

Ah Qui had stolen barefooted into the cabin and placed a tray of tea on the bracket at his bedside. From this came the tinkle that had happily wakened him, and, in a moment, other sounds, familiar and reassuring, reached his ears; the hum of his electric fan, the stutter of the deck winches' exhausts, the inarticulate cries of stevedores working cargo.

He jumped out of bed and plunged his head into tepid water, then sat on the locker and drank his tea. In a moment his brain cleared. He was himself again. But he knew that until the problem of Salvia was dealt with he could have no real peace, so he changed his sodden clothes and prepared to face it.

He found Helen Salvia on the windward side of the ship, with Harvey sitting on the deck beside her. While Glanvil slept the up-river breeze had strengthened, becoming a torment rather than a relief, for there was no freshness in this dank air sucked inward by the rising heat of the land. Harvey was talking eagerly and she bent her head toward him as though the wind made it difficult to hear; but when Glanvil drew near, unheard, he saw that she was not listening. Both their faces were serious, but the strained solemnity of hers, the blank eyes, the set lips, showed that her thoughts were concentrated inward. He was on them before they realized his coming. Harvey jumped to his feet and saluted. Mrs. Salvia blushed faintly. The feeling that he had disturbed some confidence made him awkward, and, for a moment, all three

were silent. Then Glanvil saw a swift glance of understanding pass between the others' eyes and Harvey left them. A sting of the old jealousy came into his words:

"Why did you send him away?"

She shook her head, tossing aside the irrelevance of his question.

"I've been waiting a long time; I thought you'd never come."

The wind blew her words away from him.

"We can't possibly talk here," he said. "Better come to my cabin."

He stepped aside, and without another word she preceded him. She seemed fragile and pitiful, walking thus slowly toward the verdict that lay hidden in his mind. Only a little while before, for some devilish reason, he had been anxious to wound her; now he only prayed that some inspiration might give him power to soften the calamity of the truth; but when they faced one another in the quiet of his cabin her eyes forebade him the least mitigation. It was cruel that such a duty should have been thrust on him; something of the bitterness of his tidings must surely cling to himself and make him hateful to her. He stood in silence, struggling for easy words; the suspense was too much for her; she could wait no longer.

"Well, Captain Glanvil?" she said.

It was fortunate that she had given him the formal title, subtly enforcing the impersonality of his message. And yet . . .

"I'm afraid," he began. With that word she stiffened her tremulous mouth; she closed her eyes, a dumb

victim waiting for his blow. "I'm afraid I have no good news for you."

She gave a deep sigh. It had fallen. She had taken it. He could not wound her more. From that moment there was no need for lies or half-lies, and his heart leapt with the justification of the passion that he had denied, with admiration for her strength. No other woman in the world, he told himself, could match its temper. How should a boy like Harvey appreciate it? Confident, almost elated, he continued:

"I have seen Almeida, your husband's late employer. They have separated—I can't tell you why. Your husband left his service some considerable time ago. Almeida would tell me nothing; it seemed a sore point with him. But another man, a Goanese shopkeeper to whom, it seems, your husband owes money, tells me that he is penniless and living in a hut that he has built for himself somewhere outside the town on the edge of the swamp."

"Alone?"

The suddenness of the question took him aback.

"I didn't ask that," he replied.

Her lips quivered in the ghost of a smile as if his innocence amused her. His mind caught backward at Bomba's words: "Salvia has the taste for women," but quickly dropped them, for they repaid his clumsiness by searing him like a hot iron. He had been a fool not to see that this was the thing that mattered most to her. Distrusting her courage for the first time, he sought refuge in words:

"The first point, as it comes to me, is this. It's evident

that your husband's quarrel with Almeida has ruined him from the financial point of view. He has debts and no money to pay them with; he has no employment. He isn't, in fact, in a position to support Gina and yourself. Beside that"—now his whole mind was concentrated on an attempt to save her—"I think you must be prepared to find him changed. I mean that it stands to reason that a man who has suddenly found himself ruined may go downhill. Almeida is curiously unpopular. The fact that your husband has been associated with him is bound to act against him; and when a fellow becomes desperate . . . you understand? To put it shortly, conduct no longer seems a matter of great importance. He's bound to relax; he can't help it. And that means . . ." He hesitated.

"No, no; I can't put it as definitely as that," he hurriedly assured her. The memory of Bomba's jumbled suggestions accused him. If Bomba meant anything besides coffins he meant drink. But he must spare her. If only he had the gift of lying easily! Her blue eyes pierced him; their flame dried up the springs of his speech; he could dissimulate no longer, and she knew it. There was a long silence.

"I think I am wasting your time, Captain Glanvil," she said at last. "You have been very kind—too kind—and I am grateful; but I can't afford to be indefinite. You've prepared me, and now I want to face everything that has to be faced. First I must try and see him. If you can possibly arrange for me to be put ashore?"

"No, no," he answered quickly, "you can't do that alone. That would be taking too big a risk."

She looked at him for a moment thoughtfully as if she were trying to weigh in the echo of his words the gravity of the fear that prompted them. In that look there was apprehensiveness, but no vestige of fear.

"Of course you are right," she admitted. "I am so much in your debt already." She paused. His heart brimmed with anxiety to serve her, but before the offer reached his lips she had continued: "If you can possibly spare him, I think Mr. Harvey would go with me."

If she had planned her pause as a device of coquetry it could not have tripped him more neatly. Humiliated, suddenly distrustful, he asked himself if she were not playing with him and whether the game were worth the candle. His offer went cold on his lips; but when he found her eyes again he saw that they were humble and quite guileless, so that he took courage.

"If you particularly wish Mr. Harvey to go with you," he said, "I'll certainly release him. I had planned to go with you myself."

"Oh, in that case," she murmured, flushing faintly, "of course . . ."

He wished he could divine the meaning of her change of colour; he knew how hollow must be a triumph enforced by his superior position; he wanted to make her state her preference, being content to abide by it; but as he gazed at her and sought for smoother words in which to put his question his pity accused him of selfishness. As if she hadn't troubles enough of her own without being worried with rivalries that led nowhere! For, after all, the office for which he and Harvey were competing in her graces was precisely that of handing her over to another

man whom she herself was determined to rejoin. Not merely selfishness, but selfishness unreasonable and futile. In spite of this disillusionment, he eagerly grasped the opportunity that her hesitation offered. Harvey must suffer the disability of youth.

"I will go with you whenever you are ready," he said.

"In five minutes," she told him. "Gina is asleep. I'm afraid I must wake her."

"I shall be waiting for you at the gangway."

"Thank you."

4

Half an hour later the rowers ran their boat aground. The tide was out, and so a strip of wet sand separated them from the beach. Submissively she allowed Glanvil to carry her ashore. He could not have believed that she weighed so lightly.

By this time the breeze had fallen; the casuarinas sighed with the gentle breathing of sleepers; above them a white sky hung low as if its purpose were to imprison the steamy heat of the land. They passed the kiosk, where a group of soldiers from the fort, whose ill-fitting uniforms made them look like the chorus of a second-rate opera company, sat drinking. They passed the house of Almeida. The sight of its scabrous pink plaster still had power to move Glanvil.

"That is Almeida's house," he told her; but she only answered: "Yes?"

Opposite Bomba's Refreshing Refuge he stopped and asked her to wait for him. Inside it the piano still

tinkled; the men whom he had seen there in the morning had not moved; most of them were drunk, and Glanvil felt glad that he had not invited her to enter. Bomba himself prolonged a siesta in some inner chamber from which he emerged with a strip of brown stomach showing through the gap in his pyjamas. Without his spectacles he blinked more pitifully than ever, as if he were too sleepy to realize what Glanvil wanted.

"Yes, captain; yes, gentleman," he mumbled. "Certainly . . . *cer*—tainly!" He trotted out on to the veranda with bare, simian feet, calling in Swahili to the native who had misled Glanvil in the morning and now sat investigating a jigger by the side of the paralyzed dog.

"Look here," said Glanvil distrustfully, "this is the chap who put me wrong this morning. Are you sure he won't lead me astray again?"

"No, captain; no, gentleman," Bomba cynically confessed. "That's a good boy; he always obey orders."

They set off again in silence. Suddenly, as if confidence had failed both together, the pink houses and the avenue of mangoes ended. They crossed a strip of waste land on which goats, chickens, and thin-legged children were routing amid mounds of refuse. The rank smell of the goats struck them suddenly. Under that white sky the air was like a tepid bath in which separate odours floated heavily. They entered a bazaar of squat daub houses, encountering in succession the emanations of dried fish, cloves, blue-mottled soap and turmeric. Behind the mud platforms on which these goods were displayed Indian shopkeepers squatted. Children in pink muslin trousers and tawdry ornaments of sequin played

about the stalls, and through the middle of the street stalked solemn files of Africans who passed the small-featured shopkeepers with an air of undefinable aristocracy, tall and austere, like Goths wandering through the markets of Rome or Alexandria, making way for none.

The congestion of the bazaar ended as abruptly as it had begun. Their guide gathered pace, leading them through groves of coconut, past grass *bandas* where natives sat with splayed feet among broken shells and oily mounds of copra. And then the bush began, ashen and listless, drugged by its own monotony. Here and there they surprised a lonely baobab, like some grey-hided, elephantine monster asleep. Not a bird sang; not a bough trembled; the silence watched and listened as Glanvil and his companion passed.

"The edge of the swamp," Bomba had told him; and soon he guessed that their search must be nearly ended, for they came suddenly on a series of parallel sluits, clogged with papyrus, from which a melancholy heron rose into the whiteness. The path twisted cunningly, like a snake that returns along its own track, guiding them between the fans of water-palms and under arches of wild vines, until, at last, they emerged into a circular clearing with a round grass-hut in its centre. Their guide waved his hand and smiled, then squatted down to resume his toilet.

"I suppose this is the place," said Glanvil. "Perhaps I had better make a reconnaisance."

"Will you?" she whispered.

He went forward into the open. It was a patch from which the bush had been cleared by fire. Here and

there the trunk of a more obstinate tree remained thrust above the soil, blackened and torn, like the mutilated survivor of a battlefield. Between them the black soil had been lightly tilled and planted with irregular lines of mealies that had just put out their tassels of bronzed silk, and through this plantation a track, smoothed by bare feet, led straight to the opening in the *banda* that stood for house-door. For the most part the place seemed kempt and orderly, yet the order, such as it was, suggested by its disregard of squares and straight lines that the master brain was that of a native rather than a white man.

Here the sky seemed to be suspended from the tops of the trees. The clearing steamed like a saucepan. Glanvil advanced, through a sinister silence suddenly broken by the sound of gentle crooning, which came from a pair of green doves in a wicker cage attached to the wall of the *banda*. Then, from behind the house, he heard another sound: the regular impact of a pestle on a wooden mortar, pounding grain for porridge or sugar-cane for fermented drink. More eagerly, he turned the corner and saw that the pestle, a long pole hardened by fire, was wielded by a native woman, a girl of sixteen or seventeen whose polished shoulders gleamed like satin as she raised it and let it fall with a grunting expulsion of breath. One arm was clasped by a circlet of shining metal; over the opposite shoulder and breast she had draped a square of pale blue cotton with a bold pattern of red-centred whorls. On the ground at her feet, paying no heed to the impacts of the pestle, a naked baby embraced the neck of a gigantic gourd.

He had not stared at her a moment before the woman became conscious of his presence. She dropped her pole and gathered the cotton square about her bust, facing him, breathless, and almost pretty, in her alarm. Her eyes were brown and gentle, like those of some domestic animal; her teeth, which showed as she panted with exertion or surprise, magnificently white; there was something elfish and ingratiating about her small, close-shaven head. As soon as her modesty was secured she swooped down, lithe as a panther, upon the child and caught it to her brown breast, from which refuge it stared back at Glanvil with the solemnity of a puppy. Her alarm assured him that she was alone, and so, having no language in which he could make himself understood, he called to Mrs. Salvia to approach.

"There's no one here," he said quietly, "only a native woman and a child."

She joined him, pale and very composed. He was conscious of what that composure must have cost her as she waited in the lonely clearing out of sight. The two groups stood staring at each other with a mutual fascination. Suddenly Mrs. Salvia touched Glanvil's arm.

"The baby," she said in a whisper. "Do you notice anything?"

Ever since he had first set eyes on it he had been puzzled. Now, in an instant, he realized why. The creature's tangled hair was of a silky texture; its eyes, though dark, were not veined with brown like those of the mother; above its bronze pot-belly and narrow chest he saw a face that was, in fact, a caricature, reduced and devilishly ingenious, of Gina's as he had seen it during

the last week burnt black by the glare of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. He felt it his duty to soften this discovery.

"Yes," he said, "I see a likeness, but that's nothing to go by."

She shook her head. "Oh, yes, it is. The child is like Gina, but even more like him—when he's asleep. The woman looks frightened. I'm sorry we've frightened her. It's not her fault. She's very young, isn't she?"

Her words breathed a sort of dreamy tenderness that Glanvil found it impossible to understand. The situation between these two women demanded some reaction more violent. Her quiet seemed unnatural, ill-omened; he could not guess how long it would last.

"Come along," he said gently, laying his hand on her arm. "After sunset it will be difficult to find our way back. Your husband isn't here, and there's nothing to be gained by staying."

"Just one moment," she answered softly, freeing herself from his hand. With the same air of gentleness she advanced. The woman shrank from her with a wild movement of distrust, then recovered herself, and stood smiling timidly. Mrs. Salvia put out her hand towards the baby, who grasped its forefinger in a copper fist. Glanvil was conscious of the shudder that went through her at this contact.

Then she began talking rapidly in a low voice and in a tongue that he could not understand. The eyes of the black girl lightened; evidently she understood. She nodded her head quickly in answer to several questions. Her lips opened, murmuring uncouth words, among which

Glanvil caught the name of Salvia. And all the time that Mrs. Salvia darted her swift questions the baby gripped her white forefinger and scrutinized her with its beady eyes.

Glanvil had never felt more helpless or pitiful in his life. He knew that he was watching the disintegration of half a life, word after word falling like a sledge-hammer on Mrs. Salvia's bruised mind. He could do nothing but marvel at the strength that steadied her level voice and wonder how long it could sustain her.

At last she disengaged her finger from the baby's fist and turned to him.

"That is all," she said gently. "She has told me everything. We had better go."

They went. He dared not ask her any question; but by her bemused silence he knew that the supreme moment of her drama had passed without a cry or a tear. Behind them, as they left the clearing, the thudding of the wooden pestle began again, rhythmical, insensitive. They threaded the margin of the swamp without a word. As they left it the air lightened suddenly, the dry bush was transfigured in a burst of tender sunshine. The land-breeze had wakened, and with its gentle persuasions loosened the bonds of heat. Birds began to sing, and, just as if the same tidal motion had freed the springs of Mrs. Salvia's heart, she, too, began to speak, distantly, as though she were talking to herself rather than to him.

"They have been there two years," she said. "The baby is eighteen months old. It was just eighteen months ago that he sent me his last letter, when he told me to come out. Of course, he never thought I'd be able to.

Now I can read between the lines. How miserable he must have been!

"I told her that I was his wife. She didn't seem to understand. I suppose one wife is the same as another to her. Of course, he is drinking. She says that he is drunk every night. That stuff she was pounding was sugar cane. He has taught her Italian . . . a sort of Italian . . . just enough for her to understand him and answer. The baby is a girl. Like Gina."

Suddenly she darted a question at Glanvil:

"Can you understand it?" she asked. "I know nothing about men, only him. If you were in his position. Tell me, honestly."

Her question relieved him. The endless disjointed monologue had become intolerable. But he could not answer it.

"Men are made differently," he said, "and, of course, he's not English."

"Yes, yes, I know. That makes no difference. I think he's just like anybody else. Could you have done it? You must know." Fortunately, she did not wait for his answer. "When I was alone in Naples," she went on quickly, "it would have been perfectly easy for me . . . I mean it would have been perfectly easy for me, if I hadn't been myself, to . . ."

She shrank from the completion of the sentence, yet looked to him for a reply. It was not for him to defend Salvia, but he felt that she desired passionately to hear some word in his defence, even if it were only a shred round which to crystallize her own humiliation and disgust. He tried to help her out.

"We know nothing of the circumstances," he began. "If a man was down on his luck . . . hopelessly . . ."

She gave a hard laugh in which he heard the first suggestion of scorn.

"You asked me to be honest," he said.

"Yes, I'm sorry. I don't know what we're doing or where we're going. I think my brain has gone."

He was silent. Like atoms in the black heart of a thunder-cloud they had been carried on their way, heeding nothing. Night had fallen. The bazaar was behind them. They had reached the end of the avenue, where, at a distance, Bomba's veranda detached itself from the night like a lighted stage. The tinkle of the clockwork piano tinkled and failed in gusts, wafted or broken by invisible currents of air. No voices could be heard; the figures on the veranda spoke with gestures that were like the movements of marionettes.

As they came abreast of the "Refuge" a shout of laughter went up. It was directed at a lanky figure in khaki shorts and a torn shirt: a wild-eyed creature with the unkempt hair and flying beard of a desert fanatic, who clung to one of the veranda stanchions and shouted black blasphemies in three languages at Bomba's customers as they baited him. Bomba himself stood blinking at this gratuitous addition to his sources of entertainment. In the roadway a half-moon of native boys had gathered to watch the fun, and from time to time the drunken man dashed out at them like a cornered bull and sent them flying into the darkness. In one of these flashes Glanvil's ears had caught a burst of foul English. Automatically he placed himself between the scene and Mrs. Salvia and

quickened his steps. He had a shameful suspicion that the man was English. A woman might hear offensive things. He laid his hand on her arm with an instinctive movement of courtesy and protection.

In that moment the drunken man caught sight of them hurrying through the shadow and staggered out to meet them. At least he had wits enough to see that Glanvil was a stranger.

"You off the English ship?" he shouted. "That's very good. Here, you stop a minute. I can speak English. I've been in England, I have. Here, mister, stop! You come along with me and I'll show you a fine . . ." He left the sentence unfinished, for, as Glanvil quickened his pace and passed him, he caught sight of Mrs. Salvia. "Christ! He's got the goods with him," he confided to the attentive gallery in a whisper that was quickly drowned in torrents of laughter.

Glanvil felt the arm of Mrs. Salvia contract in a spasm of terror. Her fingers suddenly clutched his, communicating such an urgency of appeal as he had never known. She began to run, dragging him on into the darkness as though some horror followed and they could only escape it by speed.

"It's him!" she gasped. "Laurence! What can I do? What can I do?"

As she spoke his dull brain had guessed it. Feeling himself utterly inadequate to help or console, he put his arm about her as they fled, hoping that its strength might steady her or at least remind her of his presence and the needlessness of this headlong flight. At last he found

feeble words and tried to comfort her, breathlessly telling her that he was sure Salvia had not seen her face.

"I know, I know," she answered, and then, with a sudden violent impatience: "But what difference does that make?"

It was true. Now she had begun to cry—quietly, inconsolably. His body was shaken with her sobs that broke on him like a surf. He could do nothing but hold her closer and take their impact. He knew that she could no more listen to reason than an exhausted child. Her sobs were hard, voiceless shudders that spent themselves slowly. When a sound escaped her it was high-pitched and pitiful, like a baby's wailing, and it broke his heart. Pain of the body he had seen, and death, but never this inarticulate extreme of spiritual suffering that made a human creature dumb as a wounded animal. The reflux of her agony rose up and choked him, because he, too, was dumb and could not express it.

They passed the tomb-like house of Almeida. They reached the shore. Even in the presence of the boatmen whom he kicked awake she could not control herself. She sat quietly sobbing as they pulled across that starlit water toward the ship.

5

As Glanvil stepped forward the bell rang for dinner. In his code of conduct this meal ranked as an official occasion, and though he would gladly have missed it that evening, he submitted to its discipline.

Looking into the saloon he found it empty; the others knew that he was aboard and were waiting on deck, in accordance with sea etiquette, for him to enter first. As he came up behind them Hendry gave a sudden unnecessary cough, and Cheadle, who always spoke so slowly and with so many qualifications that no impetus made a change of direction embarrassing, had time to weave Glanvil's presence into the tissue of a conversation of which, no doubt, he had been the original subject.

"As I was just remarking to the mate, sir," he drawled —he had an old-fashioned prejudice against two "chiefs" on one ship—"this port of Panda is going to be a big affair some day when that railway's finished. I can see it growing up and properly laid out, the same way as some of us old ones have seen Hong Kong and Kowloon. And now that I come to think of it," he continued, droning in Glanvil's ear, "Matthews, young Charlie Matthews, that is, the son of old Charlie that used to be chief of the *Altair*, told me he'd been to some place of this kind in the war. Panda. Ay, that's it, Panda."

They took their seats at the table. Hendry, ruddy as a new-born baby in his white ducks, was on the top of his form.

"I always say, sir," he told Glanvil ingenuously, "that heat is the only thing that keeps my figure within reason. I should think I've fairly lost two pounds to-day."

He proceeded to make good the deficiency with an enormous slice of cold barracouda. "This climate just suits me prime, and a better lot of niggers I've never worked on. They're the real raw stuff, none of the Joh'burg Christians you get on this coast south of twenty degrees.

I'll give our Mr. Almeida a first-class certificate for his stevedores. They know what work is. I suppose the chief engineer's been spending his day in pyjamas."

"And that's all you know about it," said Cheadle. "I've spent the day in a boiler suit. We had to go down bottom-side and have a look at those old engines."

Hendry laughed mischievously. "The second's been acting as a nursemaid by the look of it."

Cochran lifted his eyes with a grin of gratification, then lowered them, and Cheadle, who had been waiting for an opportunity, came back to the point at which Glanvil had doubtless disturbed him.

"Is that so, Mr. Cochran? I suppose that means that the lady has not yet got in touch with her husband? I thought she and the little girl'd be going off this morning."

The question, addressed to Cochran, was aimed at Glanvil, and he knew it. He also knew that, sooner or later, the story must be told and that it was better to tell it himself than to leave it to be elaborated by gossip. He felt that a time had come at which he must share his responsibility.

"I took Mrs. Salvia ashore myself," he said, "and I'm afraid the poor woman is up against it. The husband was employed by our agent, Almeida. It seems that they've quarrelled and Salvia's on the rocks. Rather more than that, he's living in the bush like a native with a black woman and drinking pretty heavily."

"Tch, tch, tch!" Cheadle clucked sympathetically. "As I was remarking to Mr. Hendry, every heart knoweth its own bitterness."

"That's a bad look-out, sir," said Hendry, with irrepressible cheerfulness. "I suppose Almeida can do something for her?"

"Almeida's a curious man," Glanvil replied. "He's very bitter about Salvia—why, I don't know. Almeida'll do nothing."

"Now, if she were landed like that, say, in Newton-in-Makerfield, it'd be a case for the Y.W.C.A. or the G.F.S.," said Cheadle. "And if there isn't one of them here, as there ought to be, it's a case for the consul."

"The nearest British consular agent," said Glanvil, "is at Mozambique, and the odds are ten to one he's Portuguese."

"Well, well," muttered Cheadle, meaning to say that things were ill, "I must admit it's a hard case for an Englishwoman. I don't like to imagine Mrs. Cheadle in a similar predicament. How does she take it, sir?" he continued, tactfully assuming the air of a distinterested observer.

"Naturally she takes it hardly. The child complicates matters. Obviously, we can't leave her here, and so I shall put her ashore at the first British port we touch—probably Suez or Durban. But that's looking a long way ahead. For the present I'm merely anxious about what she may do. She might even attempt to do away with herself." Cheadle shook his head and Hendry stopped eating. "It's a serious matter, and I look to you to give me a hand. You'd better talk it over between you and make some arrangement by which she won't be left too much alone. It isn't part of your duty on this

ship; but from the point of view of human charity I think we're responsible."

"Well, sir, I quite agree with you," said Cheadle ponderously. "As a married man I can appreciate the poor young woman's position, so to speak. Dear me, dear me! I'll speak to the engineers this evening, and no doubt the mate will have a word with Mr. Harvey . . . If that is necessary," he added, succumbing to the temptation of a righteous malice.

"Certainly, certainly," Hendry mumbled.

Glanvil rose from the table with a feeling of satisfaction. It seemed to him that he had dealt with the situation in a way that not only made the future easy, but explained anything that had appeared equivocal in the past. As he left the saloon Hendry followed him.

"By the way, sir," he said, "we had a visit this evening from that Mr. Cardozo, the one who came on in uniform this morning. He says that he, or some friend of his, had a few hundred tons of copra coming down the coast, and he wants to arrange with you about freight. That would give us a clear run to Liverpool," he added, with a wistful nostalgia in his voice. "At this rate we should discharge all our Naples cargo in three or four days. Cardozo said he'd come and see you first thing in the morning about it."

"Very good, Mr. Hendry."

On the desk in his cabin he found an envelope addressed to himself in an unfamiliar hand. From Mrs. Salvia, he supposed, for she was uppermost in his mind. His heart raced at the thought of what it might contain; but as he tore it open he saw the signature of Almeida at the bottom

of a scrawl that might have been written with the left hand. Then he remembered Almeida's dead right arm that he had touched in his dream. Was that the explanation of Almeida? Did he lie there like a statue because he was half-paralyzed.

I hear Cardozo wants freight for Liverpool, he read. *Arrange nothing without consulting me.*

He crumpled the paper angrily and threw it away. There was no end to the fellow's insolence. Any pity he might have felt for Almeida's infirmity was neutralized by his resentment at the peremptoriness of this note.

Arrange nothing without consulting me. It was an order. He did not take his orders from Almeida. Cardozo, no doubt, was a rogue, but Cardozo's roguery seemed transparent and above-board; there was nothing sinister about it, nothing that compelled the dislike with which everything about Almeida inspired him, and not least the fact that his vindictiveness was responsible for Salvia's degradation and the depth of Mrs. Salvia's despair. The question of arranging for cargo had been left to his discretion by the owners. If Cardozo's terms were good he felt inclined to accept them. That might teach Almeida the lesson he needed.

The flush of irritation that Almeida's dictatorial note had caused him subsided; his thoughts returned, with anxiety, to Mrs. Salvia. The fact that he had cleared the ground for the future by making his intentions known to the crew now seemed to him less important than her present condition. It was true that, unlike Almeida, he had delegated his responsibility; but that did not make him less anxious. When he had spoken of the possibility

of suicide he had merely been improvising a reason for his appeal. Now the idea took monstrous shape and haunted him so that he could not be happy until he had seen her, and told her of the plans that he had made.

He went quietly along the deck toward her cabin, a hungry trepidation in his heart, but when he came abeam of the engine-room ventilators he stopped.

He heard voices—hers and Harvey's; she was speaking softly, composedly. His thankfulness that she had mastered her fit of sobbing was drowned in a flood of jealousy. Harvey had slipped into his place. That, after all, was exactly what he had suggested at the dinner-table; he had only himself to thank for it; but his passion made him insensible to reason. Her composure mocked him. When it suited her convenience she had not hesitated to play upon his feelings; now, in the presence of the man she preferred, she could control herself.

Of course, she had always preferred him. Harvey had the trick of being natural with her, their intimacy was frank and unrestrained. He remembered Port Said and a dozen other examples of this preference. It hurt him to think of them. Harvey, as he knew him, was just a handsome, inconsequent youngster, with nothing to recommend him beyond an appealing freshness and enthusiasm. Good company, no doubt; but when it came to serious matters, to matters of judgment, an older head was needed. If the woman couldn't see that she was a fool. They were talking away like two children. "And I am behaving like a child myself," he thought.

He halted. Why should he take any count of Harvey's presence? It should be easy to approach them, to send

the boy about his business, and then explain what he had decided. Easy; but he couldn't do it. He could not conquer a shyness and diffidence which he knew to be ridiculous.

He made his way instead to the deserted boat-deck and walked slowly to and fro under a moon which quenched the scanty lights of Panda and washed its plaster buildings with a warm phosphorescence. With a fierce clarity of vision born of the day's emotions, he saw within that moonlit shell into the heart of the town. He saw, and hated it as a place that had no right to exist. Like all those moribund cities of the Portuguese coast, it had lived too long. Attenuated by intermarriage, debased by the infusion of black blood, clotted by intolerable heat, vitiated by four centuries of disease, the generous strain of Albuquerque's conquistadors had dwindled to a subhuman type that knew no passions but greed and enmity and lust. He thought of the mean Cardozo scheming against Almeida; of Almeida, Salvia's destroyer; of Bomba, with whose poison the railwaymen rotted their malarial brains; of Salvia himself, that apparition, who had once been loved by such a woman; all horrors, concentrated within those mystic, opaline walls. The place was poisonous; even from the *Vega's* deck, alone and isolated upon the harbour's shield of platinum, he tasted the breath of its miasma. And around it, there, beyond the black coconut groves, lay, for contrast, the bulk of Africa, virginal in moonlight, immense, contemptuous.

The eight bells of midnight had struck before he descended, exhausted, but relatively calm. He began to wonder if Mrs. Salvia was asleep. Anxious for her com-

fort and his own, he made his way along the empty deck to her cabin. The dread of suicide still haunted him; her very words: "You might as well throw me overboard to the sharks"—kept on rising in his mind. He found her door open. A curtain hung limply before it. He could hear nothing. It was so quiet that a fear seized him lest she should have anticipated him. He pulled back the curtain.

She was lying asleep with Gina huddled to her breast, finding comfort, like a lonely animal, in contact with another of her species, clasping the child with one protective arm outstretched like the curved paw of a cat. Behind the thankfulness that for the moment filled his mind he became aware, once more, of Gina's cruel resemblance to the baby in Salvia's hut, and then, overpoweringly, of the sweetness of Helen Salvia's lips.

He had never been able to see her face before; and now that her blue flames no longer abashed him, he stood satisfying his greedy eyes on its beauty, its childishness, its harrowing pathos. The ardour of his gaze, or else some instinct of maternal watchfulness must have warned her, for suddenly her eyes opened. They were soft and placid, for though she looked at him she was not yet awake. They had the calm of another world in which neither Glanvil nor Salvia existed.

He would have disappeared, but now it was too late. He spoke in a whisper.

"I'm afraid I've wakened you. I'm awfully sorry. I only wanted to see that you were all right."

"All right?" she echoed.

He was only thankful that his intrusion had not of-

fended her. Gina gave a little groan in her sleep. Helen Salvia's hand made a protective movement that was a caress.

"But now that you are awake," he went on, "I want you to know that you are safe on board here. From any violence, I mean. I don't think we shall be here more than a week. Then you can come back to Europe with us—probably to Liverpool. You needn't worry your head about ways and means."

"Liverpool?" she murmured. "I don't understand."

It was difficult to explain all over again.

"To Liverpool," he repeated. "From there you can easily get in touch with your English friends."

"I'm sorry," she said. "I think I must be dreaming. I don't see what you mean even now. I have no friends in England. Not one. Besides . . ."

"You can trust me," he said, with a tremor in his voice.

"Besides," she went on, "Laurence—I mean my husband—is in Panda. We shall go ashore to-morrow."

CHAPTER IV

I

So much for the high flights of sentiment and chivalry into which he had ventured. With a single sentence she sent him crashing. She was unanswerable; and yet he felt that she should have been answered. Far into the small hours he lay, vexed with this perversity. "Perversity" was a charitable way of putting it. That she should have made him ridiculous by reducing to absurdity the solemn homily he had delivered to the crew overnight was forgivable; but that she still thought of returning to Salvia after what she had seen of his habits and his domestic arrangements seemed to him sheer insanity. Time after time he rose, determined to tell her so. It's not only mad, it's criminal, he would say, and with the words on his lips realized that, according to ordinary moral standards, the crime would be his if he tried to dissuade her.

It was not a case to which conventional morality was applicable. The moral standards of settled communities living under the protection of laws had no validity in Panda. One might as reasonably live by the laws of the bush in London. To accept such standards in Panda was disarmament; to practise them suicide. Of course she didn't understand this. In any case, suffering and anx-

iety had made her irresponsible. He had a right to dictate to her for her own sake and for Gina's.

He had no right. And, what was more, again his conscience questioned the purity of his motives. Horror of Salvia's degradation, pity for her offended goodness, a sense of human obligation, all these might be counted for virtue. But the complex of his emotion knew other elements. Jealousy. Was it not true that through his own discomfiture he had been quick to rejoice that Harvey was in the same boat? Was he not more eager to deny her to Salvia because he desired her himself? Did not his special pleading for the higher morality spring from a passion that morality of the ordinary kind would condemn?

But blacker than these self-accusations, and more desolating, was the suspicion that perhaps she was not merely driven by a distorted sense of duty, but drawn by the obstinate attraction of Salvia himself. It was unnatural, incredible, but possible. If that were so there was nothing more for him to think or say.

He woke to find a cup of cold tea on the bracket beside his berth. He had no idea how long he had slept, for his watch had stopped. He rang the bell for Ah Qui, whose yellow face parted the curtains like a serene moon, remote and contemptuous in its celestial calm.

"Tell chief officer captain wanchee," he began in pidgin English, "and take this cold muck away."

He went. A moment later Hendry entered, sweating and bewildered.

"A bit off colour, sir?" he said.

"No; I'm all right. Sit down, Mr. Hendry. I wanted

to speak about what I told you last night. Mrs. Salvia. I had another talk with her later. She seems determined to join her husband, in spite of everything. Of course, we can't stop her. No good meddling between man and wife."

"Stop her!" said Hendry, with round eyes. "Mrs. Salvia went ashore in Almeida's boat first thing this morning —she and the child. She told me you'd authorized her to ask me. I hope I've not made any mistake."

"No, no. You did quite rightly." Glanvil recovered himself quickly. "I'm sorry I disturbed you. Everything going well?"

"First rate, sir. Only twenty or thirty tons left in number two. Mr. Almeida's stuff is coming alongside already. Copra and ground-nuts."

"What? But, good God, man, I haven't accepted it! Nothing is settled. It's like Almeida's damned impudence!"

"Three dhows are alongside already, sir. I took it that everything was arranged. Of course, I can't make myself properly understood with these niggers of his; but the papers are in order and the tally-clerks are aboard. Nothing unbusinesslike about it. I can't complain of that."

Glanvil swung himself over the side of the bunk. This irritation on the top of the other had shaken him back into himself.

"Understand, Mr. Hendry, you don't take one bag aboard until I authorize you. The fellow's trying to rush me, and I'll see him damned first."

"Very good, sir. As long as I know." He paused in

the doorway. "Then that Cardozo's been aboard ever since five o'clock. He's waiting in the saloon. I gave him some breakfast in your absence, though I guess that eating's not much in his line."

"Quite right," said Glanvil, already stripped to the waist. "Tell him as you go out that I'll see him in about a quarter of an hour. By the way, what time is it?"

"Just on four bells, sir."

"Good Lord! Very good, Hendry."

He threw on a kimono and hurried along to his bath. The fresh water was tepid and unstimulating. He still had a feeling that his body did not belong to him; it was numb and lifeless, permeated through every cell and fibre by a dull and hungry aching; a kind of spiritual toothache with which the departure of Helen Salvia afflicted him. For such a disease there was no cure but in some intense distraction, and for this reason he welcomed the interview with Cardozo and the resolution of Almeida's imbroglio. He would have his work cut out to put Almeida in his place and to deal with Cardozo's twisting. So much the better. When he entered the saloon in his clean ducks he had strung himself up to a pitch of energy and concentration that he had not known for weeks. Cardozo sat waiting for him over a glass of whisky. It seemed as if Rennels had taken his old order to make the Governor comfortable as a charge in perpetuity. But that didn't matter. In a business discussion the clear head was bound to score. The clear head!

"Well, Mr. Cardozo?"

Cardozo, curiously enough, seemed more impressive without his uniform. He was solemn, moreover, in every-

thing but his flatteries. With these he was all over Glanvil. Hoped that he hadn't felt the heat—but the English were masters of all climates; implored him to avoid infection with the Panda type of fever—and yet, with a physique like his, what would it matter? Glanvil smiled to himself, wondering if the fellow really thought such compliments of value. Then came the word "fever," and in the back of his mind a sudden chill of apprehensiveness. The hut in the swamp. Mrs. Salvia. Why had this invincible argument not presented itself to him before? Gina's health. She might have listened to that, and no one could have questioned his motive in advancing it. He pulled himself up sharply. This would never do.

"You came to talk to me on business, Mr. Cardozo?"

Cardozo waved his hand airily, as if business were of small importance compared with the compliments of gentlemen; but Glanvil persisted.

"I gather that you have some cargo here for Europe, and that you want to make arrangements with me to take it. I shall quote you a fair rate. There will be no question of preference. The only question that does arise is that of time. If your stuff is on the beach, well and good. The chief officer said something to me about it coming down country. If that means that we should have to wait in Panda for any considerable time there's nothing doing. It's a matter of simple arithmetic. Time represents money with my owners, as with anyone else. You'd better let me know definitely, and at once, what tonnage you require."

Cardozo shook his head tolerantly. The word "definite" was one that had no place in the vocabulary of the

coastal Portuguese. He began to explain at length how the export trade of Panda had dwindled in the years since the war, not so much, he insisted, through the increase of freights as through actual scarcity of tonnage. He drew fantastic pictures of produce rotting on the *shambas,* of planters living from hand to mouth on native food, while acres of cultivated land degenerated into bush. The arrival of the *Vega,* he said, had been a godsend. As soon as the ship arrived he and his friend, Fernando Souza . . .

"I've never heard of him," said Glanvil. "I think we'd better get to the point."

But, of course, Glanvil knew him! His nickname was Bomba. *There* was a story, too. With Glanvil's permission he would tell it. How, when the old guns of the Fort of Jesus were dismantled, Souza had bought the lot—a little arrangement with the officer in charge—and turned them into . . .

"Business, Mr. Cardozo, business!" Glanvil interrupted impatiently. "I gather, so far, that you and Souza have been collecting this stuff. What I want to know now is how long you'll take to get it aboard, and the exact quantity you want me to deal with. A ship like this is an expensive mechanism. What I want is figures."

"But how can I tell you," Cardozo protested, "what I don't know myself? The roads are out of repair. The natives are unfriendly and have to be driven. Then there's Almeida, who's always working against us. If only you knew the malevolence of that man!"

"That is a matter that doesn't interest me," Glanvil told him.

"Besides which," Cardozo placidly continued, "up-

country the rains are beginning. Much earlier than usual. It is a misfortune. That means that we shall have to cope with breakdowns on the road, with fever, with all sorts of complicated expenses and delays. If you put yourself in my place, captain, you will understand. These rains . . ."

His words died away in Glanvil's mind; his presence was forgotten. Instead of the familiar saloon and Cardozo's furtive, greedy eyes, Glanvil saw a beehive hut of grass in a forest clearing; instead of Cardozo's whining voice he heard the swishing of rain—rain that descended with the fury of a torrent, merciless in spite and power of desolation. He saw two women that cowered under a sagging roof. One of them was Helen Salvia; and all around the black sluits of the swamp brimmed with rain that held them in a prison guarded by mud and water, a horror of misery and loneliness. And the rain never ceased. How to escape from such torment?

"Ten days," Cardozo was saying. "Ten days—possibly a fortnight."

Glanvil roused himself.

"Ten days—a fortnight? Why don't you say three weeks—possibly a month? You don't know, my friend; that's the truth of the matter. I can't make any arrangement on those terms. I've told you that time is money. We're wasting it now. When you have anything definite to propose I'll be glad to consider it. At present you evidently haven't."

He rose, but Cardozo caught at his arm and held him.

"Not definite? Wait a moment. I understand. We talk a little more definite—no?" He put his finger to his

nose and leered at Glanvil. "We will see. This is big business; plenty of money in it; no expense spared. We gamble. You understand? We buy the up-country stuff for nothing; the planters are glad to take anything; they don't know that a steamer is waiting at Panda." He laughed cunningly. "That means big profit, many thousands per cent. Listen. If the convoys break down on the road because of the rain is it your fault? The rain is an act of God. Your owners must face their loss. But you shall not lose. No, no. Not at all. Souza and I are generous men. A bonus of one hundred pounds sterling. What do you say to that? No?" He became more urgent. "One hundred and fifty? Who can say that is not generous? Three months' wages for one month's delay. Perhaps less than a month. It is in God's hands."

He put his head on one side affectedly. Glanvil stared down at him white with anger.

"You damned scoundrel! Get out of this!"

Cardozo returned a charitable smile that excused this barbarian violence.

"Not enough? I will talk with Souza. Perhaps we make it two hundred. Who knows?"

"Come on, get out!" said Glanvil shortly. "Do you want me to pitch you overboard? Bribery's one thing, but barratry's another. You've come to the wrong shop for either. Hurry up, now. I've no time to waste."

Cardozo rose to his feet regretfully. The hand that grasped his arm was determined. The smile of ingratiation left his lips. All of a sudden he turned ugly.

"You touch me!" he snarled. "You dare to touch me!

I am the Acting Governor—I am the police. You come here, you insult our flag. And now you insult me. You English think you are God Almighty. If I want to keep your ship I keep it. I am the port authority. I keep your ship and you get not one dollar . . . not one dollar. You think you are in England; but no, this is Panda."

Glanvil laughed.

"This ship is English soil," he said. "What's more, I'm master of it and you're going off it, double quick." He flared up. "By God, if you don't move, I'll have you kicked off by the quartermaster."

Mustering all the dignities inherent in his illustrious name and many offices, Cardozo went. Glanvil watched him down the gangway; he was taking no risks. Then he passed to the well-deck in the pit of which Hendry stood dissolving as in a Turkish bath.

"I've seen Cardozo," he told him. "I've kicked him off and he's got to stay off. Not to be allowed on board again. Understand that, Mr. Hendry."

Hendry blinked at the order under his sweat-beaded eyebrows.

"Very good, sir. Look out!"

He clutched Glanvil's arm and pulled him aside as an iron claw swung past his head on its way from the lighters to the hatch. "Near shave that, sir," he went on with a dewy smile. "No time wasted here, as you can see."

Glanvil followed the running cable's descent into the hold; he heard the chain clank as it hit the bottom. He leaned over the edge of the hatch. From below rose the musty odour of old sacking peculiar to the bowels of ships mingled with a fetor of black flesh. The cries of the

stevedores echoed as in a cistern. The hold was nearly empty.

"How much longer?" he asked.

"Three hours at the outside, sir."

"You say Almeida's stuff is alongside?"

"Three dhows, sir. For'ard there, on the starboard side. The tally-clerks say there's more coming this afternoon.

"Give me the papers."

Hendry produced a sodden document. Glanvil glanced through it. No fault to find with Almeida's office work, anyway. Five hundred tons of copra and ground nuts, so many bales of sisal fibre and parcels of rubber, one hundred bags of cloves. In the memory of Cardozo's infamy and before this evidence of straight-dealing he felt a sudden revulsion in Almeida's favour. Apart from the sinister vindictiveness of his conduct towards Salvia, who doubtless deserved it, there was little fault to find with him. Only one thing struck him as queer. Almeida's careful documents were dated for the 21st of December, the day after they had left Naples.

"I'll take these along with me, Mr. Hendry, and have a look at them," he said.

He threw off his coat and settled at his desk. It was incredibly hot. Under such a climate it was only natural that the people who lived in Panda for years on end and generation after generation should deteriorate. Probably Cardozo was a fair specimen: roguery and corruption springing like weeds in a soil of stupendous fertility. If it were hot even here, with the light excluded and the fan going, how much hotter it must be ashore! He looked at

his watch. She had been ashore nearly five hours. In five hours she would have had time to reach Salvia's hut. How could she have attempted such a journey alone? It was only another facet of her stony perversity. Perversity he called it, and yet, perhaps, it was only another name for an exaggerated sense of duty. Call it duty by all means: anything rather than love. If she had only had the sense to ask for someone to go with her! Even Harvey. She could have had her Harvey if she wanted him. But obviously she didn't. Madness!

He compelled himself to scrutinize Almeida's draft bills of lading. *Copra: five hundred tons.* The figures blurred before him. Five hundred tons. Five hours.

Much might have happened in five hours. He found himself following her step by step from the moment at which she had left the ship with Gina and her pitiful baggage. He saw her dressed as he had always seen her. It struck him for the first time that superficially she had always worn the same clothes since they left Naples. He saw her land on the white beach. What could she do with her luggage? In the back of his mind he remembered a broken-down ricksha, like a tramp's perambulator, that he had seen with its runner asleep between the shafts. And, of course, she spoke Italian—first cousin to Portuguese. Probably she would get porters. He saw that pathetic caravan plodding up the dust of the avenue past Bomba's Refuge, threading the narrow ways of the bazaar where the Indians sat resigned among their spices. They passed the coconut plantations, so many trees, so little shade; they entered the dry bush; the earth burned their feet like a hot plate; the trees stood grey and motionless; their

branches were like burnt twigs that have kept their form and will fall to powder at a breath of wind. But in that bush there was no wind. And now they neared the swamp. They passed, like driven cattle, toward the horror of that meeting with the black woman and the drunken man. And he saw the face of Salvia as he had seen it in the light of Bomba's veranda on the night before, full of depraved abandonment and cruelty. God, it was intolerable! He could imagine no more. He heard himself speaking as from a distance.

"I shall accept Almeida's offer," he was saying.

And with these irrelevant words the owner of that distant voice assumed possession of his empty body, as normal consciousness masters that of a dreamer who wakes.

2

Straightway he wrote a letter of acceptance to Almeida, on the understanding, he made it clear, that all the cargo marked in the lists was ready, and that delivery should be completed within a week. As for freightage, he was ready to accept, on behalf of his owners, a small percentage in excess of the rates current at Mozambique and—in the case of cloves—at Zanzibar.

He sighed and closed this letter with a feeling of satisfaction, if only because it put a definite term to their stay in Panda. Then he sent along a message to Hendry, telling him to make his own plans for the stowage of Almeida's cargo and to get to work on it at once. Cardozo, from the shore, must see Almeida's dhows unloading.

The lesson was to be administered in a visible form that he could understand. And in seven days . . . why then, perhaps, if all went well and space remained, Cardozo's own cargo could be dealt with.

The bell rang for tiffin. It was a melancholy meal, for heat robbed the food of all taste, their bodies of all appetite. It was too hot even to talk. When he returned to his cabin and stripped himself for a siesta, Glanvil saw the letter he had addressed to Almeida lying on his desk. For his peace of mind it was sufficient that it had been written. It represented not so much a commercial arrangement as a clarification of his own ideas. Conscious of a weak concession to the climate of Panda he let it lie there, for the moment he lacked the energy necessary to send it ashore.

"Besides," he thought, "it will really be much better if I go and see Almeida myself in the cool of the evening. Whatever Almeida may be, we are entering into a business relation, and it's my duty to keep in touch with him personally, particularly if Cardozo is going to be a nuisance."

It pleased him to disguise the real reason of his anxiety to land, which was nothing but an indefinite desire to be nearer to Helen Salvia in her emergency. That he would see her seemed extremely unlikely; and yet the mere fact that they would be united by a continuity of land might mitigate the ache that afflicted him. There was no reason, after all, to be ashamed of it. Apart from every other consideration he had a duty toward her as a fellow-countryman. He had brought her to Panda on his own impulse and at his own expense. He, alone, was respon-

sible for her coming, and if duty, in this case, coincided with a spiritual and physical necessity, who should blame him?

Consoled by these reflections, Glanvil fell asleep. At five o'clock he wakened. Realizing no more than an hour of daylight remained to him, he dressed quickly and hurried ashore. Even as he left the ship the first sacks of Almeida's copra were being handled with a cheerful expeditiousness; the number of dhows that hung alongside the *Vega* had been increased to five. The more the better, he thought; the sooner the stuff was on board, the sooner this unreal dream would be ended.

He did not realize the rightness of his metaphor to the full before he found himself abreast of Almeida's house. They kept him longer at the doorstep than on his first visit, and, waiting there, he became aware for the first time of the building's antiquity, discovering, behind the iron grilles of those jealous windows, panes of mica instead of glass that were like the opaque films of cataract in the eyes of an aged man that ever must look backward, inward. What violence, what choked passions this empty shell had seen in its four centuries he could not imagine; only, behind its muteness and secrecy, he felt sure that such things had existed.

The same native opened to him and led him silently through the same dank passage. His footstep, following, echoed with the same rhythm. In the hushed green *patio* the bush of frangipani volleyed the same sweetness, round its belled trumpets the hawk-moth quivered, endlessly suspended. The absolute identity of place and action and sensation impressed him.

"I have been here before," he thought.

Of course he had been there before, and less than thirty-six hours ago; but that was not the explanation that he needed. He had been there a hundred times, before he had been born; he had always been there. The place and the moment and himself in it belonged to some state that had no relation with measurable time. He had never felt like this before; he had never heard of anyone feeling like this.

And suddenly his mind recalled the atmosphere of a house in the Higher Town at Brixham that was said to be haunted by grating wheels and hoofs of an old funeral cortège. The place had been dismantled, and cut up into cottages, but still, for certain ears, the ghostly sounds persisted. He remembered discussing this phenomenon with a ship's doctor in Sydney and listening incredulously to the explanations that physical science gave.

"It's like this," the doctor had told him; "the æther, whatever that may be, is said to be susceptible to impressions of light and sound and even of thought. Thought, you see, has probably a physical basis. The impression is scored on it rather after the manner of sound on the wax discs from which gramophone records are made. The æther is always there: none of your Brixham housebreaking could make any difference to it; it's always there, and on it—I'm mixing my similes, but that can't be helped—records of the most intense human feeling and its surrounding circumstances are reflected as on a mirror and fixed as on a sensitive plate. Those records are there; but we civilized men who have lost half of our senses can't see

the image on the mirror or hear the record on the wax except under certain conditions: the silence of midnight, some particularly sensitive states of mind such as you get in great emotion or on the edge of sleep. Given those conditions images may be seen and sounds heard. For they *are* seen and heard. And that," he went on to say, "is why ghosts, as they call them, persist for centuries and always act in an identical way. After all, it's reasonable. A plate can only take one picture and a gramophone record can only play one tune."

It was fantastic. At the time when the explanation was offered he had smiled at it; and yet the theory seemed applicable to the feeling of Almeida's house, relegating to the time of some forgotten experience his own echoing footsteps, the silent native, the white-belled flowers and their quivering visitor. And why not Almeida himself? Everything in Panda was like that, and he in it, a ghostly participant. In this light, curiously enough, the place seemed no longer evil, only, in its vagueness and suspension in the hurry of time, pathetic. States of great emotion. No doubt Mrs. Salvia was responsible for the whole phantasm.

The shadowy native beckoned him as before. He entered Almeida's room. The interior was as dark as ever, darker, possibly, for it was now within a few minutes of sunset. This time he could see nothing of Almeida's face. There, in front of him, rose the catafalque of mosquito-netting that enclosed it. It would scarcely have astonished him if he had heard himself greeted in the words that he had heard once before; but that experience was

spared him. Out of the midst of the muslin Almeida's voice came with a measured, painful slowness:

"Sit down, please."

A gramophone record, he remembered thankfully, can only play one tune. But, for all that, he felt a desire, conquered with difficulty, to escape from Almeida's presence. There was something about the atmosphere of the room that distressed him: a heaviness, as of air devitalized, masked but not neutralized by the inward drift of frangipani, such an odour, he thought, in an unusual flush of imagination, as should conjure vultures into the sky. With a sense of shame at his own inhumanity, he hastened to cut the interview short.

"Some of your cargo is already being dealt with, Mr. Almeida," he said. "The dhows you sent alongside this morning."

"Good."

"I must confess I didn't like the tone of your note, sir. I don't accept your instructions or anyone else's about the disposal of my space. As a matter of fact, I had proposals of cargo that would have filled it from another quarter which . . . which I rejected. I decided, at any rate, to give you preference. Here are the terms on which I wrote a formal acceptance. I shall be glad if you'll confirm."

He held out the letter. As his hand advanced he felt a disinclination that was almost a warning from lifting the net. He held it there; Almeida's hand did not move to take it, and Glanvil shamefully remembered the other's incapacity.

"I'm sorry," he said, forcing himself to put the letter inside. Almeida's invisible left hand reached over and took it from him. "I might have gathered from your note that you have difficulty in writing."

"Yes," said the voice of Almeida, "I find it . . . increasingly . . . difficult to communicate."

"The proposal I've made to you," Glanvil went on, "is a percentage that we can discuss later—frankly, I'm acting on the opinion of you that Mr. Marx expressed in Naples—above the current rates cabled from Mozambique and Zanzibar. You'll be able to get those more easily than I can."

"I will try," said Almeida.

That wasn't like him; and yet, every moment that he lingered, Glanvil became conscious of the man's spiritual force. He had noticed it in his first interview; but now he was also conscious of an effort behind that force: the aura of an intense concentration emanated from that prostrate invisible figure which made him feel that he was making cruel demands. He hastened to take his departure.

"I won't tire you any more, Mr. Almeida," he said. "As a matter of fact, I'm sure we shan't quarrel about the figure."

"No," said Almeida, after a harrowing pause.

The conventional words of farewell died on Glanvil's lips. This time, remembering his dream as an actual and repeatable experience, he did not offer his hand. He left the room abruptly, and walked alone, as before, into the street.

He was not himself. He felt a nausea of the spirit that threatened to become physical. All the energy and con-

fidence with which he had stepped off the steamer disappeared. In his contact with Almeida virtue had gone out of him. He couldn't even see as he had seen before. A peculiar dimness overhung the avenue of mangoes; it was as though he saw everything through smoked glasses: a phenomenon at once strange and familiar.

"I've seen it before," he thought, "but really I can't bother to think when. What's more, if I don't sit down and get a drink pretty quickly I shall be sick. This blasted sun, I suppose."

Apart from the kiosk, whose bottles were too beautiful to be true, the nearest place at which he could satisfy himself was Bomba's Refuge. He approached it determinedly but with a deep repulsion. He told himself that he was only going there to get a drink that would put him on his legs again; in reality he sought it because the hateful Bomba was his only link with Salvia and Salvia's wife, a link of dubious strength in any case, and more particularly since his morning's quarrel with Bomba's partner, Cardozo. After that he could not even be certain how he would be received.

He need not have troubled himself. Sympathetic was not the word for Bomba. He bowed Glanvil through the rows of drinkers on his veranda to an inner room and poured him, with his own fat hand, a glass of methylated whisky. There he stood, his forearm resting on the convexity of his stomach, watching the poison take effect, with the wrapt interest of a child that follows the struggles of a depinioned fly.

The spirit ran heavily, like molten lead, into Glanvil's limbs; and yet he felt happier for it. Despicable as

Bomba was, he seemed, after Almeida, a creature of refreshing humanity. In any case, it would have been ridiculous to take him seriously. As for his partnership, the union of Bomba's capital and Cardozo's official influence was doubtless a marriage of convenience and conveniently terminable as soon as the thieves fell out. Even so it amazed Glanvil to find Bomba so affable after the way in which his partner had been used that morning. There must be some motive of self-interest behind this glowing welcome.

And, as he soon discovered, there was. Mrs. Salvia. Of course, her landing had been the talk of Panda; the subject burned on Bomba's tongue. He watched Glanvil narrowly to catch the moment for a propitious opening, never guessing that Glanvil was doing exactly the same thing. It was Bomba who took the plunge:

"You never come back las' night, captain. That boy show you the way all right? Yes, yes, gentleman, he knows the way. Another drop? It's a beautiful brand of whisky, beautiful! No? But why you never told me who the lady was that wanted to see the poor Salvia? Why you never told me that the first day, captain? I'm your best sympathetic friend, gentleman, yes, Bomba, and we do business later. Only why you never told me that was Salvia's wife?"

He cooed these words with a voice of the softest insinuation that put Glanvil in two minds whether to kick him or to regret his lack of trust; but the fact that Bomba had something to tell him and seemed, at this moment, more grotesque than offensive, prompted a direct question.

"Who told you that the lady was Salvia's wife?"

"Who told me, captain?" Bomba's body quivered with suppressed amusement. "One who ought to know. Ha, ha! Salvia himself. The poor Salvia had found clients yesterday. These men that come down from the railway, he gets hold of them. Salvia knows all the languages. He can put them up to what they want and they give him a dollar here and there. That means all up with the poor Salvia. Full to the neck!" He chuckled dismally. "But Salvia keep his head for business even when he's tight. He sees you in the road. Another client! Then he comes over and sees the lady, too. That took poor Salvia's breath away. 'Bomba,' he says, 'you're my last friend.' Sympathetic last friend, that's Bomba. 'I've seen a ghost out of Hell!' he says. 'Who's that, then, Salvia?' I ask him. 'It's my wife, Bomba,' he says. 'My God, it's my wife!' So I took him in, gentleman, and gave him another. Gave him another . . . free of charge. 'Please Heaven,' I say, 'she's brought enough to bury you decent, Salvia. That's the one that came along with the captain this morning and asked for you.' 'But it's an English ship,' he says. 'It's impossible. Where did it come from?' 'Naples,' I told him. 'Then it's true,' he says, 'it's true,' and begins to cry like a baby. It was too much for him after the fever and all he'd suffered from that cursed Almeida. No holding him. The man was mad, captain, mad, gentleman. That poor Salvia will do murder some day."

Glanvil had had enough of it; there was a dark madness brooding under Bomba's ghoulish words; the macabre obscenity of this creature whose gross brown body fattened on drink and death and insanity made him feel

murderous, too. The thing that had once seemed fantastic suddenly became a ghastly reality. In the fury of that moment he beheld the brown, twinkling eyes of Bomba with hatred; he could have crushed him with as little compunction as he would have shown towards a swollen puff-adder blinking at him from under a stone.

Bomba, unconscious of the feelings that he aroused, laid his hand on Glanvil's arm.

"Tell me, captain," he purred, "has the lady brought money for Salvia's honest debts?"

"I don't know," Glanvil muttered. "I know nothing about it." It was only by an effort that he restrained himself from letting fly at Bomba's smiling face. His only thought was to escape from his own fury and disgust, to breathe an air that was free from this contagion. Out he went into the street, leaving Bomba to blink aggrieved astonishment behind him; he went wildly, pushing on through the dark without consciousness of anything but the fiery nebula of his brain, floundering as though he were drunk, until, at last, the naked root of a baobab tripped him and he fell full length.

For a second this flying impact must have stunned him. His senses emerged as from the nescience of an anæsthetic, into a state of passivity in which each new wave of light or scent or sound ruffled the pool of consciousness with new and delicious tremors. Above him the trunk of the tree leaned monstrously. Through its tufted branches the stars of the vacant southern sky shone down. Around him hung the persuasive harsh aroma of bruised brushwood; beyond, the night thrilled with the ringing castanets of the frogs and the electric fizzing of cicalas, whose in-

termittent din was like the sputter of a titanic wireless coil.

At first he was content only to see and hear. Then he pulled himself on to his knees, in an attitude of prayer. He rediscovered himself, although as yet he had not grasped his relation to his surroundings or attempted to repair the continuity of thought. Cautiously groping backward, he remembered Bomba, his sudden hatred, his precipitous flight. He saw them dispassionately as the actions of a stranger and a maniac; they had no connexion with him; they touched him so little that now they did not even seem horrible. He was himself again.

It was not enough to feel: now it was time to think and act. He could not even be certain where he was. Somewhere in the dry bush, the meagre trees and the aroma of brushwood told him. Somewhere not far from water the ringing chorus of frogs affirmed. There, on his left, shone Canopus and the Cross. He had been travelling due west, south of the town and in the direction of the swamp. Toward Helen Salvia. Now he understood. That old ache returned to him, and with it a certainty, too strong and definite to be attributed to superstition, that he had been drawn there, without volition, by the call of some spiritual necessity. His presence was needed. A message had reached him and compelled him unconsciously; now, in the full possession of consciousness and reason, it was his duty to go on.

He made swift calculations. The longitudinal direction seemed right enough. Latitude was a more difficult matter; but an exploratory line, drawn north by south, must somewhere cut the track which they had followed yesterday, a definite path, smoothed incessantly by the

passage of bare feet, that should be recognizable even in starlight. He debated whether he should make his first cast north or south, decided on the second and looked upward for guidance. Where, a minute before, the Cross had hung, the sky was dark. Volumes of cloud were drifting heavily seaward from the coastal hills like the smoke of a bush-fire. Discouraged for a moment, he quickly realized that a wind of such constant direction could give him as good a bearing as the stars that it obscured. Some associated idea of precision made him suddenly anxious to check his time. He struck a vesta and took out his watch. It was only eight o'clock, a bare three hours since he had left the infinitely distant *Vega*. Once more he had that momentary sensation of living out of time.

Now he was all acuteness. Before he threw the lighted match away he took a careful glance at his surroundings, more for the sake of future reference than in any hope of recognition. Something in the form of the clearing in which he found himself seemed familiar. How many desperate hopes had such familiarities betrayed! And yet, in the shape of the baobab over whose roots he had stumbled there was a character which he felt sure that he recognized. It was a giant of its kind; it leaned toward the north, as though some hurricane had half unearthed it in its youth, the naked root over which he had fallen outstretched like the arm of a crouching lion. He had seen it once before; what was more, he had imagined it again as he sat with Almeida's figures before him following Mrs. Salvia on her lonely way. In that imagined journey this tree had stood out as the most salient feature, as the

one shape among hundreds that had impressed itself on his memory. He struck another match. The wax burned with a flame clear and unwavering. He made a hurried cast to the left, for with closed eyes he could see the baobab on the right of his picture. Within twenty yards of it he struck a path—*the* path, perhaps.

Of that he couldn't be sure; but the discovery so elated him that he felt a new confidence in his instinct and in the force, whatever it might be, that had led him so far with such precision.

Buoyed by this sense of power and purpose, he pushed on. The bush thickened; it grew darker; the path, with cunning gyrations, confused the sense of direction with which he had started. It was useless to halt, or to question, or to reason. The only thing of which he could make certain was the track's continuity, and that by his muscular sense of its smoothness rather than by sight; for with every moment the darkness was thickening, clotting like a milk-warm fluid, nor was there any light in it but the flame of an occasional firefly that spurted upward like the head of a struck match and quenched its light as it planed downward on fixed wings. It seemed doubtful whether these floating points of light had any existence outside his own body, whether they were not, in fact, a fiery species of those black specks that float before bilious eyes, vanishing at the first attempt to fix them.

For more than half an hour he groped his way onward. By this time the clouds hung so dense and low that their direction could no longer be seen; the air that he breathed was part of them. Suddenly he became aware of a quietness, as though the pulse of night had stopped. It

brought him up short with a feeling of imminent disaster. And he was not alone: the whole bush shared in this strangled intermission; the cicalas ceased their din with one accord; the frogs were silent. It was as though some influence borne on the wings of darkness clutched at the heart of all living things. His own heart fluttered with distress. Something was coming.

It came, came with a flash of fire whose passage could be felt like the flick of a whip and left his eyes scored with a fantastic pattern of flaming trees that burned on the retina after the flash had passed. For a moment he feared that he had been blinded, that for all the rest of his life he would see nothing but this tracery etched on his brain with fiery acid; but before it had faded all thought was overwhelmed by such a buffet of sound as might have sent the globe crashing out of its orbit into space. And then again. Blow upon blow the hammers fell. The drums of his ears were driven inward. Blinded and deafened, he swayed until the wind caught him and swept his legs away, flinging him breathless on the ground, where he lay motionless as a frightened animal, dazed by the tumult of broken trees whose leaves and branches, stripped by the hurricane's suction, streamed over him as on a flood. Above the roar of the vexed forest and the crashing thunder this wind had a voice of its own, a shrill trumpeting, a titanic battle-cry that was more terrible to hear because it seemed a thing of the earth rather than of the air, the cry of a body rather than of a spirit, the expression of a devilish and personal spite.

But Glanvil was thinking not of his own danger, nor even of Mrs. Salvia's. In the first fury of wind that had

tossed him aside, every thought of which he was capable had fled aboard the *Vega*. How was she placed for shelter? Could her anchors hold? Could Cheadle get up steam in time to save her? Hendry and Cochran were good seamen, ready for emergencies; but in such an emergency as this seamanship counted for nothing. He himself would have been helpless. He saw her plucked from her moorings, blown seaward like a straw, piled up on the coral ledges of Vumba with a broken back. His ship, and he should have been aboard her.

Only once before had he heard that trumpeting in the wind. Fourteen years ago, in the Formosa Channel, he had caught the tail of a typhoon, and then running in stripped and shaken to Hong Kong, he had seen the Kowloon side piled deep with the matchwood of broken *sampans*. He knew what wind could do. By God, didn't he just!

It passed. It had gone as swiftly as it came. The extended horror could not have lasted thirty seconds. In flicker after flicker of lightning the track of the devil revealed itself. Like a scythed alley in a cornfield. Like the bed of a torrent, along whose edges livid trees that had escaped destruction stood shuddering.

For a moment Glanvil could do nothing but blink at this scene of destruction in a dazed wonder at his own survival. Then, with a triumphant return of reason, he saw in the straightness of the storm's track, an excuse for hope. The thing was a tornado, flung from the sky like a spinning peg-top, monstrously destructive, but within narrow limits. On the margin of its track withered euphorbias that a man could have overturned stood un-

scathed. It was a matter of hit or miss, and in that vast anchorage of Panda the odds were ten thousand to one on the escape of a single ship. A passionate confidence returned to him. The thing no longer seemed terrible. The "African Pilot" had warned him that such storms were not uncommon on that coast at the beginning of the rains, and Cardozo, only that morning, had said that up-country the rains had broken.

The words made him think of Helen Salvia. He rose to his feet again. The sky cracked above him like an iron dome, and this time, simultaneously, the burst clouds discharged their deluge, drenching him in a moment from head to foot, dimming the flicker of lightning that never ceased drumming in anger on the parched bush. In a moment the heat of his body was cooled, and, what was more, his mind, that had been curdled with heat, experienced an instant relief, as though the water were sluicing through his brain, washing it clean of the mephitic vapours with which it had been cumbered. He stretched wide his arms, upturned his face to let the stinging water cleanse him. Out of its violent katharsis he was born again. He could have laughed aloud for joy as he pressed the water from his eyes.

He pushed onward. On the left of the tornado's reaping his path now shone in the lightning like a trail of silver. Good, and better; for by this he knew that its fury must have spared Salvia's hut. The torrent never ceased; the track was now a rivulet deeper than the height of his angles. The lightning grew less frequent; he went on through a watery darkness out of which a barrier of stiff leaves suddenly met his face. He could not believe that

he had gone astray. Groping with his hands, he discovered that this barrier was nothing but the downward-beaten fronds of the tunnel of dwarf palms under which they had passed. He tore them aside, fighting his way through. It was an encouragement; at this rate he could not be more than a couple of hundred yards from the clearing. Drenched and grotesque as he was, he felt that he was ready for anything. With head lowered and hands held before him, he plodded forward through thick mire. It seemed as though the tunnel of palms would never end. And then his outstretched hands encountered a strange resistance which was not that of a tree but of a sodden human body. He heard a sharp cry of alarm. He trembled.

"It's you," he whispered. "Thank God!"

From the moment in which he touched her wet dress he had known that it was she. She did not answer him. There was no need for speech. Only silence or music could do justice to such a meeting; and music there was in the surge of drumming rain, in the brazen peals of thunder that broke above them. His hands had found and caught her shoulders just in the same way as he had held them once before; but now he was strong and confident, and darkness veiled the defences of her eyes. The wet muslin of her blouse clung to her shoulders, defining their naked slenderness; the thrill of such an intimate contact made him madly happy. He felt that he must speak; but he was choked with words, and his broken voice could only tell her how soaked she was. "I must see that you don't take cold," he said.

She answered nothing. But for the warmth that

burned into his damp palms she might not have been alive. Her pitiful muteness overwhelmed him. Never had he known a tenderness so devastating. In the darkness her cold, wet cheek touched his. He could have cried aloud for joy with the exultation of a swimmer who breasts a breaking wave. The violence of his emotion had in it the sudden freedom from physical restraints that overtakes men in the face of a cataclysm. Drunk with his own potency and with the tumultuous darkness, he gathered her in his arms. Her body relaxed, the wave engulfed them both; but as his fingers, eager for fuller knowledge, hungrily defined the soft contour of her arm, they encountered an unexpected resistance—Gina, like a small drowned kitten, huddled to her mother's side and dumb with terror. In his exultation he had forgotten the child's existence. The discovery brought him to his senses.

"Good Lord!" he muttered. "She was so quiet, I didn't know she was there. Poor little kid, I'd better carry her for you."

He picked up the small soaked bundle in his arms. She did not even whimper. Beneath the drumming of the rain he felt her rapid heart-beats like the flutter of a nestling, and with that the mad moment passed.

"We shall be drowned if we stay here," he said, almost roughly. "Will you follow me? Keep quite close. I think I know the way."

"Yes," she answered.

"Thank God I found you!"

"I knew you would come," she answered.

They were trudging through water half-way to their

knees. The rain quickened in bursts of violence like some infernal tattoo. Gina, her icy terror thawed by the comfort of Glanvil's body, began to wail softly. He held her closer.

"There, now, don't cry, my pet," he said, and then, as if the momentous question meant nothing: "How did you know?"

"I can't tell you how. I knew."

His heart was flooded with gratitude for those words. He wanted to ask her what had happened; but there was horror enough in the night without his adding that of reminiscence.

"You were coming back to me . . . to the ship?"

"Yes."

He dared not ask more.

The way, that had seemed endless in daylight, contracted. Some instinct, like that of a nocturnal animal, guided Glanvil's feet through the watery void. Within a little while his eyes became adjusted to these subaqueous conditions. Suddenly he heard a loud drumming of rain on galvanized iron, and saw, as a diver stumbling on a sunken wreck, the ribs of broken hovels protruding where the scythe of the tornado had sheared clean through the centre of the Indian bazaar. No light fell on this scene of obliteration, but there, amid the débris of contorted roofing and the matchwood of splintered stalls and furniture, Glanvil's eyes discerned small groups of white-robed figures pitifully squatting, chained to the scene of destruction like horses in a stable on fire. They crouched there among their sodden spices, inert and helpless beneath the fury of rain. It seemed as if they might sit there in

resignation until they were drowned. Nobody brought them help. They did not expect it, and, indeed, there seemed no reason why it should be given them; for their life, at the best, was only a phantasm of fever and sun that any new catastrophe might dispel.

Through the broken village Glanvil and Helen Salvia passed without a word. Now, on the open road, the haze of light that escaped through Bomba's shuttered windows brought their three figures into focus for the first time. Before this she had been no more to him than a rain-stifled voice or a voiceless presence. The sudden revelation of her small, drenched body made her human and more pitiful for the courage with which she tried to keep his pace. Up to this point his mind had been too numbed by beating rain to feel fatigue for himself or to think of it in her. Her dragging steps accused him. Surely it was his duty to find her shelter. But where? Apart from Bomba's Refuge, which, while the thought was forming itself, they had left far behind, not one of the stucco houses showed any sign of habitation. They stood on either side of the flowing roadway with the hostile and obstinate look of animals feigning sleep or death. Glanvil slackened his pace, debating whether he should knock at one of their closed doors. Even if he knocked, the roar of the rain would probably prevent him from being heard. There was no house in all Panda that would give him welcome, unless it were Almeida's; and the very thought of Almeida still had power to make him shiver. If only her strength could hold it would be better to push on.

For a long time he had been unconscious of his burden.

Suddenly he guessed the reason. Gina had fallen asleep in his arms. The circumstance filled him with a peculiar pride; he felt that he must tell her mother what had happened.

"The kid's asleep," he said, breaking that long silence. Mrs. Salvia did not answer, but Glanvil, encouraged by the sound of his own voice, continued: "You must be dreadfully tired. Don't you think it would be better if we tried to shelter somewhere until the rain passes?"

She did not seem to hear him. The words floated heavily downward like pebbles dropped into still water until they reached the deeps in which her mind lay drowned, but as soon as she became aware of them she answered, with a frightened urgency: "Here? No, no; I couldn't wait. If only we can get out to the ship."

As she spoke a curious humility and diffidence seized her.

"I've no right to ask you that," she added quickly. "Just for to-night . . . if you will have me."

"Don't speak like that," he answered, hurt by her wilful misunderstanding of his attitude. "There's nothing that you can't ask me. When you went away this morning I knew it would be impossible."

"Did you?" The words were spoken mechanically and had no meaning to her; she was quick to repair the injustice. "Yes, you were right," she said. "Impossible. He is changed, too dreadfully changed. But that is no reason . . ."

She stopped, and when she spoke again she might just as well have been addressing a stranger.

"Captain Glanvil, I can't, I can't possibly talk of what

happened on shore. You'll understand that. I know you will. But I can't accept your . . . hospitality, your great kindness, without making my position clear. I *must* be honest with you. I've no further claim on you—of course, I never had any; I'm talking stupidly—I mean that I've already burdened you with my false pretences."

"Don't speak like that," he entreated. "There's nothing . . . nothing . . ."

She would not let him continue.

"No, no," she said, "there's a great deal. Please listen to me. I'm so much in your debt already, and I want you to understand that I'm quite penniless. The little money I had—it was your generosity that left it to me—is gone. We're entirely destitute. No possessions but the clothes that we're wearing. You must understand that. But I can't possibly live another hour in Panda. Not another hour. The passage that you offered me . . . I've no right to ask you to shelter me further; but if you can be merciful . . ."

"Please don't say any more," he implored her. "We'll go aboard at once."

Merciful. He was convinced that there was a double meaning in the word, that her delicacy prevented her from demanding not only the shelter which she must know that he could not refuse, but also immunity from a passion that was distasteful to her, but which might easily be taken as a condition for that protection. This entreaty, although unspoken, was as evident as if she had put it into words. It fell upon his mind with a sudden chill. It was so definite, so undeserved, so humiliating a contradiction of their dark and passionate meeting. Unless

he had misunderstood the meaning of that stormy embrace? Unless the embrace itself had been nothing but a hallucination of rain and wind?

Sobered, he sank into a painful silence, in which he became aware of the pink phantom of Almeida's house. Instinctively he hurried past it. Together they reached the frontage of the sea, where waves raised by the wind's passage pounded on the beach, the sound of their anger conflicting with that of the rain's fury. His eyes peered into the blackness of two waters, seeking the *Vega's* lights. Not a spark could be seen. A horror seized him lest his hopes should have been vain, the vision of his broken ship swept all other thoughts out of his mind, until he consoled himself with the thought that through such density of falling water no ship's lights could penetrate. There was no reason why she should share this agony. Abruptly he thrust the sleeping child into her arms.

"If you'll hold her," he said, "just for one moment, I'll try to get a boat."

The foreshore sogged like a quicksand. One boat lay full of rainwater to the gunnel; others lay keel upward on the strand. Groping in the darkness, he tried to turn one over and found his feet entangled in the warm, writhing limbs of two of Almeida's boatmen who had taken shelter beneath it. He cursed them in English and tried to make them understand that he wished to launch the boat and return to the ship. They answered with fluent protestations, holding up their hands for mercy. Obviously they were terrified, and he could do nothing but add to their terror by threatening them with a lifted oar if

they refused. Luckily for him, their cowed spirits could not stand this last assault. Sullenly they obeyed him, putting the boat to rights and heaving it outward into the margin of foam, where it lay bumping with the impact of each new breaker.

He called to Mrs. Salvia to join him, but she could not hear, and in the end he was forced to trudge back and fetch her. Boarding the boat, she refused his help, wading herself into the edge of tumbled water. They pushed off into a blackness that hissed with rain, straight rods of rain beating the surface of the sea. The rowers pulled a sharp stroke that made the boat's fabric shudder with each jerk forward. A deeper darkness closed on them. They might have been in full sea, a hundred miles from land, as they moved on toward the invisible *Vega*.

For still, though Glanvil strained his eyes, no lights of a ship could be seen. The rowers went bumping on into the blind night as though they were sure of their direction. They rowed so far that Glanvil began to wonder if they had miscalculated or overshot her. He could do nothing. It seemed a case in which the instinct of a savage might be more reliable than any reasoned calculation. The resignation of extreme fatigue fell on his mind. Behind him stretched a gulf of rain-beaten darkness, a physical hiatus that seemed to detach the actual moment from all the past. It was as if a thick black line had been scored across the page of his destiny, irreparably breaking his life's continuity; as if the story must begin all over again and move along new lines toward an ending that it was futile to anticipate. And it did not seem to matter.

Suddenly Mrs. Salvia touched his arm. He saw above

them a shape that rose and fell monstrously. Like a symbol of faith triumphant the hull of the *Vega* appeared. The boatmen pulled in cunningly beneath her plunging shadow. Glanvil, with Gina in his arms, jumped for the gangway. Mrs. Salvia scrambled after him. Like flies upon the flanks of a hippopotamus they clung to the pitching ladder and mounted it.

3

They reached the head of the gangway. In the doorway of Hendry's empty cabin Cheadle was standing, a hunched, high-shouldered figure, staring out at the rain. The appearance of Glanvil and his companion in their clinging clothes did not seem to astonish him. He was off duty. The spiritual and physical tornadoes that had whirled through Glanvil's life, that dark gulf, and Panda beyond it, did not exist for him. On board the *Vega,* in watery isolation, the sluggish rhythm of his life had remained unchanged; but the sight of his gloomy abstraction gave Glanvil the sensation of a man who returns to some homely village after adventurous wanderings and finds the friends that he knew spinning out their lives in endless monotony, ageing, alien, and a little unreal.

"So you're not blown away, chief," he called. "There's been a tornado ashore."

Cheadle stared back with a sort of grudging incredulity.

"Is that so, sir? We've had a nice drop of rain here. It ought to clear the air a bit."

He spoke with the words and tones that he might have used to a passer-by who gave him "good evening" over

his garden hedge at Newton-in-Makerfield. "Good for the onions," he might have added. Then, with an appropriately bucolic slowness, he became aware of Glanvil's condition.

"I see you've caught it, sir," he said. "Can I be of any assistance?"

"Thanks. Mrs. Salvia has come aboard with me. I don't know if they've cleaned out her cabin. You might be good enough to ask the chief steward to see that everything's in order and that she's made comfortable."

"Very good, sir. Certainly." There was a hint of disapproval in his voice. "I see she's caught it, too. In the meantime she might take a seat in the mate's cabin here. He's taking a hand of cards aft."

"I'll go straight to the cabin, if I may," Mrs. Salvia whispered. "Thank you so much," she added, with the intonation of a woman who has been helped over a stile. "I'll carry Gina myself." Without another word she left them.

Cheadle watched her bedraggled figure as she retreated. He turned to Glanvil with a combination of wink and headshake infinitely expressive.

"It was as you anticipated, sir?" he inquired.

"I don't know, Mr. Cheadle. Evidently it was pretty bad. We must do what we can for her."

"It's a serious matter, sir. Whom God hath joined. You never know what may come of it," he muttered, as he slouched away.

You never knew. Once in his own cabin Glanvil stripped himself of his sodden clothes, rubbed back a little life into his numb body and slipped into bed. It was half-

past ten; less than six hours since he had left the ship. Once more he was staggered by the irrelevance of measured time to such swift living. And you never knew. No sooner had he switched off the light than sleep, like a black deluge, obliterated the quivering restlessness of his mind.

All through that night rain sluiced the decks above his unconscious body. An hour before dawn it stopped, in full career, as suddenly as if a tap had been turned off, leaving the sky a chaos of unformed vapour and the earth a new planet emerging from some watery epoch in geological time. A dense and uniform whiteness enveloped the *Vega,* making her like a ship that sailed in cloud. Within two hours of dawn a black and oily circle of water revealed itself. By ten o'clock her isolation was ended, the shores of Panda shining forth with their usual dreamy clarity, the hog's-back of Vumba island bloomed with a soft green stillness. It was impossible to believe that a whirling destruction had missed the town and ship alike by the space of a few yards.

From the first light the working of Almeida's cargo continued. His laden dhows bore down upon the *Vega* with cries and a steady plopping of oars out of the surrounding mist. Glanvil awoke to the busy clatter of winches, a sound that reassured, asserting the continuity of ordinary life. He was out early on the rain-scoured deck, talking to Hendry, whose eyes grew round at the tale of the tornado on shore.

"I'm glad it didn't come our way with you ashore, sir," he said. "I believe that one's liable to get that sort of mess-up on this coast. I hear that Mrs. Salvia's aboard again," he added diffidently.

"Yes, it was just as I told you. We shall have to take her home."

Hendry shook his rough head.

"I confess it beats me altogether. But you never know, sir," he said.

"And that reminds me," went on Glanvil. "There's another name for the black-list, as well as Cardozo's. The man Salvia is not to be allowed on board."

"You bet he'll try it, sir," said Hendry.

But the morning passed serenely in the ordinary round of life aboard ship. Mrs. Salvia did not appear on deck, and Glanvil made no attempt to see her. He had performed the duty that was the consequence of his original rashness, an obligation that he was ready to discharge to the last farthing. In the meantime he had fallen in love with her. He admitted it frankly—the case was now too obvious for diagnostic arguments; and that which was clear to himself he had made clear to her, with the result that she had begged him, of his mercy, to leave her alone—not in so many words, but by a suggestion that the sensitiveness of his love had made him able to understand with certainty. If any confirmation were needed, what could be clearer than the studied neutrality of her farewell? In the face of such gentle discouragement the only attitude consistent with human dignity was to leave her to herself. This moderation filled him with a certain pride; he was conscious that the admission of his love for her had lifted him above the smarting jealousies, the awkwardness, the reservations that had constrained him in its earlier stages. Always and utterly he

was at her service, and armed for her protection. She knew enough of his honesty and was sufficiently honest herself to ask for both when she had need of them. In the meantime he was ready to wait her bidding. Not without hope.

The day wore on. By afternoon the sun had regained such intensity of torrefaction that it seemed to be consciously asserting the impotence of any rain to abate its power. From the very moisture that it now sucked up from the soaked land it kindled an oppressiveness greater than any it had contrived before. Even Almeida's stevedores relaxed their labour; their cries grew fainter, their songs faltered like those of birds in July; the stutter of the winch-engines, the shriek of running cable and the heavy bumping of cargo became less frequent, merging, at last, into a drowsy bourdon to whose accompaniment Glanvil, stretched half naked on his bunk, fell asleep.

It was with a feeling of fatigue and staleness which could scarcely have been greater if he had kept awake that he opened his eyes to find Harvey, the officer of the afternoon watch, standing at his bedside. Since the struggle in Rennels's cabin the indefinite intimacy that existed between them had curiously dwindled. The fault was Glanvil's, and he knew it. The new quality of his relation with Helen Salvia made this attitude seem more than ever unworthy. He conceived it his duty to make amends.

"Sit down, Harvey," he said, with something of the old friendliness. "What is it?"

Even with this unusual invitation Harvey was not quite sure of himself. He remained standing as he answered:

"I'm sorry if I've disturbed you, sir."

"Not at all. Fire away."

"You gave orders to the chief officer, sir, that if Mrs. Salvia's husband came alongside he was not to be allowed aboard."

"Yes."

"Well, sir, just after six bells he turned up, asking to see his wife."

"And you told him to go to hell?"

"Words to that effect, sir. He wasn't easy to deal with. I had to show him that I meant business before I could get him away."

"Mrs. Salvia didn't see him?"

"No, sir, thank God." The humanity of the imprecation was endearing to Glanvil. "And then, just before Mr. Hendry relieved me, five minutes ago, one of the stevedores came up with this note. No explanation—just put it into my hand. As you see, sir, there was no address on it, so I opened it, thinking it probably had something to do with the cargo. Then I saw at once that it was intended for you."

"Very good. Let's have a look at it. And do sit down."

Glanvil took the letter. It was written in a careful pointed hand—so careful that it was evidently a copy—and headed: *c/o Bomba.*

"Sir" (he read),—*"This morning I have hear that you are in possession of my legal wife and child on board your ship. This afternoon, with my rights, I came to visit them. Yourself, or some other officer has proibited me. Evidently you have not known what you are doing. I*

hold my legal rights and I intend to reinforze them. You are not in England here and I threaten you that if she is not sent on shore by eight o'clock finally I shall put the matter to the Police who is my friend. Mr. Glanvil you are not dealing with a fool, I tell you, and this thing treats of the heart as well as of the law. Whether it is that damn devil Almeida who is behind you or that woman makes no difference. That is what I threaten. So be ware.—Yours obsequiously,

L. Salvia."

And again: *c/o Bomba. Panda.*

This thing treats of the heart . . .

As Glanvil came to these words his mind flamed with scorn and disgust. He knew that Harvey was watching him. He read on to the end, folded the letter up and then threw it aside.

"Obsequiously," he repeated. "The brute doesn't sound any too obsequious. Are you quite certain, Harvey, that she didn't hear him when he came?"

"He boarded us on the starboard side, sir. Her cabin's to port. I'm almost certain that she couldn't hear anything."

"Well, as you said, thank God for that! What did you make of him?"

He was wondering, in spite of himself, if Harvey's reply would betray his feelings toward Helen Salvia; with this test uncompleted he hung on the other's words.

"I can't tell you, sir. I suppose I made nothing of him. To tell you the truth I saw red. If he'd stopped another minute you'd have had me in irons for murder. It pretty

nearly turned me up—just the fact that a blackguard like that should ever have had anything to do with a woman of her kind. It was the limit."

"You seem to feel strongly, Harvey," said Glanvil, with an uncomfortable smile.

"I do, sir. She's a woman in a million. She's . . ." He stopped, flushing to his fair temples. "It's no good talking, sir. You see you don't know her as well as I do."

Glanvil gave a sudden laugh. It was cruel, and he knew it; but the naïve confidence of Harvey's claim to a special knowledge of Mrs. Salvia amused him. It disquieted him, too; for it revealed in her the element of secretiveness which is most distressing to a man in love. Evidently she had told Harvey nothing of her passionate encounters with himself. Fortunately, too. But the knife was two-edged; for, by the same token, she had breathed no word to him of her relations with Harvey, and this silence left room for imagined intimacies the thought of which tore his heart. From Harvey's fervour it seemed possible that his advances had been accepted. He wished now that he had not cut short Harvey's confession with that laugh. If he had not lacked all finesse he should have been able to draw Harvey out, to extract the truth that he was so eager and so fearful to know. Now it was too late. The moment of confidences had ended. But still Harvey lingered.

"There's just one thing, sir," he said.

"Yes?"

"I couldn't help seeing from the letter, sir, that Salvia has turned up nasty. Do you think he can do anything?"

"He can do his damnedest," said Glanvil, swinging himself out of his bunk. "Very good, Harvey."

"If there's anything to be done, sir, that's unofficial—I mean anything that you can't do yourself as master of the ship—I hope you won't forget that I'm game for it."

"No; I won't forget."

"Thank you, sir."

He went. His generosity kindled in Glanvil's thoughts an answering enthusiasm, a justification of the particular kindness he had always felt for him. Of course, the boy was in love, and therefore eager for sacrifice; it was admirable, and yet it left Glanvil with a feeling of hopelessness, more wounding than wistful. He knew that there was no sacrifice which Harvey contemplated that he himself would not be prepared to make in Mrs. Salvia's cause; and yet, in his own case, how different the gesture must be, how cramped and awkward compared with this abandon of youth! Alone, he might believe that he was capable of any youthful ardour; facing Harvey, he realized the shallowness of this deception. The very fact that he questioned it betrayed his age; the love of youth was uncritical, unquestioning. Physically, he believed that he was Harvey's equal, having gained in power as much as he had lost in grace; but his soul was that of a man upon the confines of middle age—and it was useless to regret. Sooner or later it was the lot of every man to be humiliated by youth, a misfortune inevitable yet tolerable if one had lived completely, generously; but only with the birth of his passion for Helen Salvia had he approached completion, and now time had cheated him.

Evening fell. He judged it best to tell her nothing of

her husband's letter; she had enough to fear without the addition of this indefinite threat. He did not even tell the other officers. Himself and Harvey, to whose knowledge it had come by accident, were the only other people whom it concerned. At sunset he walked alone on the bridge, watching the lights of Panda that trailed along the flat shore like a still snake wakeful and malignant. He became engrossed in a renewal of the phenomenon of the night before; an enormous concentration of cloud, massing its forces inland over the shadow of the swamp, then, as by signal, crowding incredibly to the attack that broke in a hellish crash of thunder and deluge of rain. He saw the lights of Panda go out, and turned in early, to lie, sleepless, under the sluicing of savage water, but secure. And the next day dawned as peerless as the last.

It was even sensibly cooler after the second night's drenching. Everywhere on shore a new green shone. Too swiftly born for growth, it seemed as if the rain had actually washed away some layer of dust that had obscured its brightness. The spirits and the songs of Almeida's stevedores revived together; the life of the whole anchorage quickened, its surface was scattered with *dhows* that brooded on the water with their great square sails like idle birds. These cruised, as it seemed, for pleasure; but round the *Vega's* bows and under her stretched anchor chains hung many dug-outs laden with fruit and fish and wicker cages of poultry which their owners traded with the Chinamen of the crew. On the fo'c'sle-head that day there was some sort of festival that flowered in crackers and squibs and red paper prayers which went sailing overhead and inland like gaudy butterflies.

"Only two days more for Almeida's stuff, sir," said Hendry, rubbing his plump hands as he entered the saloon for lunch. "I don't know if these rains will prevent Cardozo getting his down to the coast. We haven't had the pleasure of seeing that gentleman again."

"No; and I don't think we will," said Glanvil sardonically.

Some devil of false prophecy must have inspired him. At four o'clock, midway through the first dogwatch, Hendry sent down an urgent call for help. Glanvil came on deck to find Cardozo strutting in his uniform, smiling, and actually shaved. In the background slouched four soldiers from the fort, sweating and sheepish in their hot uniforms. They carried carbines. Cardozo saluted him formally.

"You are Captain Glanvil?" he began.

"You know I'm Captain Glanvil. Why do you ask?"

Cardozo looked aggrieved as an actor who has been presented with a false cue.

"Formality," he replied, brandishing a dirty sheaf of papers. His little eyes burned with a fierce and a conscious satisfaction. "Before I give you this document it is my duty to establish identity. I am the police"—he spoke like an actor in an old play announcing what he represented—"and this is the process of Lorenzo Salvia against you for the enticement of his wife, Elena Salvia, aboard this ship."

He presented the document to Glanvil at arm's length. Glanvil disregarded it.

"You can take it back to him," he said. "Mrs. Salvia

is a passenger, booked for Europe. She has paid her passage. Beyond that I have no responsibility."

"In that case I am at liberty to remove her?" asked Cardozo, with an excessive politeness.

"You're at liberty to remove yourself," Glanvil growled.

"In fact, you refuse to give her up?"

"Absolutely." By this time he was becoming angry. "What is more, I refuse to allow you on board here wasting my time with this theatrical nonsense. What's your authority?"

Cardozo bridled.

"Authority? Can you not see the uniform of the Portuguese Republic? Is not that enough?"

"No, it isn't. I refuse to be impressed by fancy dress."

Cardozo blinked, then smiled indulgently. "What if I hold instructions from Mozambique?"

"Show them to me."

Cardozo threw wide his hands, his sword clanked on the deck. "No; I admit that I have no such instructions. To say that I had would not be strictly accurate. Telegraphic communication with Mozambique has been unfortunately interrupted by the storm. Therefore I am forced to act on my own responsibility. In a matter of such seriousness it is justified. Evidently you do not understand how serious. You do not know our civil code. In this process Salvia cites you for two million *reis*—that is to say, two thousand dollars."

"Very well, you can give me your documents and go."

Cardozo shook his head reproachfully.

"Am I so stupid, Captain Glanvil? You take me for a

fool? What is to prevent you evading the law and sailing away from Panda? Let us be reasonable. I give you the document certainly; that is my duty. You will see by the stamps that it is official. Then I put an armed guard on your engines. That can hardly inconvenience you."

"We'll see about that," said Glanvil. "I must get into touch with my consul at Mozambique immediately.

"Unfortunate. As I have told you the wires are down. These storms do great damage all down the coast. They are a great handicap to trade."

For a moment Glanvil stood with his eyes fixed on the deck. It was difficult to guess how far the fellow was bluffing. He heard Cardozo murmuring the word "sympathy." Its spuriousness determined him. He took out his watch.

"I propose giving you three minutes to get off this ship."

Cardozo shook his head with a studious air of magnanimity. He pointed to the soldiers behind him.

"These rifles are loaded," he said. "What you propose is impossible." Glanvil turned away. "Impossible," Cardozo murmured, "unless . . ."

"Unless what?" Glanvil asked abruptly.

Cardozo looked from Glanvil to Hendry significantly.

"If I could converse with you a moment in private," he said, "I might be able to explain."

"Very well. Come along."

Cardozo followed him to the cabin with his sword trailing behind him. Once in its shelter he removed his gold-

laced hat, revealing a narrow, bald forehead on which beads of sweat had gathered like dew. He flung himself into Glanvil's chair with a sigh.

"This is more reasonable," he said. "It is better to be friendly."

"There's no question of friendliness. Kindly tell me in as few words as possible what you mean."

"How much better it would have been, Captain Glanvil," said Cardozo reflectively, "if you had accepted my offer; if you had trusted me rather than Almeida."

Glanvil halted in his stride, cutting him short.

"If that's all you have to say you'd better go."

"Ah, you English," Cardozo sighed. "What concentration! This is what I want to say: in this colony processes are long; they pass from one court to the next, and there are always—what do you say?—appellations. I wish to say that the process of Salvia may keep you here for six weeks, eight weeks, ten weeks, three months . . ." He waved his finger in spirals that widened.

"Nonsense," said Glanvil. "In a few days the matter will be in the hands of my consul. What's more, you may find yourself in hot water. Don't forget that!"

"Hot water?" Cardozo professed an ignorance that his appearance corroborated. "Six weeks. Now, to stay here six weeks would mean a considerable loss to your owners. They would thank you for it? I think not. You are a young man, captain. You have a career to think of. No?"

Glanvil made no answer.

"It displeases me to think," Cardozo went on dreamily, "that you should destroy this career for the sake of a

woman. Therefore I am prepared to help you." He paused. "Not interested? But listen! Salvia is a good friend to me. Naturally; for Almeida used him like a dog. Over Salvia, Fernando Souza and myself can exert an influence, a considerable influence; pressure, if necessary. For reasons of friendship—well, call it business, then—we are ready to use that influence. Fortunately, it is a civil, not a penal process. We can induce Salvia to withdraw it on the condition . . ."

"No, no. I've had enough of this. I'm not to be blackmailed."

"Listen, listen," Cardozo protested. "A simple condition. The condition that your sailing is retarded. Not by six weeks—nothing so extravagant—three weeks at the outside, perhaps less—in short, until our copra that is on the road . . . actually on the road . . . has been embarked. As I said before, we will protect you. Admit that this is generous."

"Generosity be damned! This is just barratry enforced by blackmail. As for your process, or whatever you call it, it's a put-up job. I shall take no notice of it till I hear from Mozambique. Not another word! I've finished with you."

Cardozo put on his hat.

"You are very obstinate, Captain Glanvil."

"You'd better clear before I lose my temper."

"Clear? Ah, I understand. Certainly. I leave behind a corporal and three soldiers. If you compel them to use violence it will be your own fault."

Glanvil was silent, and Cardozo, seeing that nothing was to be gained by waiting, left him.

Still hot with indignation, he threw Cardozo's document on his desk and sat down with pen and paper to compose a telegram to the consular agent in Mozambique. It seemed impossible to state the case with any brevity. Even if he succeeded in expressing what he wanted to say, the wires to Mozambique, as Cardozo had told him, were down. Possibly Cardozo had lied; probably, for once, he had spoken the truth; for unless he had been released from superior authority he would scarcely have dared to act with such highhandedness. But even if the wires were working, Glanvil reflected, it was likely that in a place so small as Panda Cardozo would have been able to square the postal officials and burke his message. A wireless set of long radius might have solved the difficulty; but the *Vega's* range of transmission was short and the coast empty of passing steamers by whom a message might be handed on. For a moment it seemed as if he was completely isolated from the civilized world. Any help in his difficulty must be found in Panda itself; and in Panda he had no friend but Almeida. Almeida must help him, for though the storm in which he was personally involved circled round the fate of Helen Salvia, Glanvil knew very well that this was only part of the larger struggle between Almeida and his business rivals. Almeida, sure of the *Vega's* arrival, had laid his plans for export in advance. Cardozo, dashing into the field a little later, had risked his capital on produce that had accumulated up-country, trusting that another bribe would keep the *Vega* in port. The bribe had failed; therefore, Salvia's process.

He wondered how far he could count on Almeida's aid.

To begin with, no doubt, Almeida would be angry with him. On their very first interview he had urged him particularly to keep on the right side of the law. But however angry he might be, Almeida's own interests were at stake, and he might be trusted to fight for them—first, because he wanted the market for himself; secondly, because it would please him to see his rivals handicapped by a glut of unexportable and deteriorating produce in which their capital was tied; thirdly, because of his vindictive hatred of Salvia. The last was a motive by which an honest man should not look to profit; but for a vendetta of this kind one could not be scrupulous in the choice of weapons.

It was even possible that Glanvil's collision with the official Cardozo had made Almeida powerless to help him; in which case he might be driven to defy the law himself, with consequences for which he would have to answer to his owners. Mrs. Salvia's predicament could scarcely interest *them*. Cardozo knew what he was talking about: it meant that he would lose his command. He could see himself in the office at Liverpool, explaining. It would be useless to explain. And yet, whatever it cost him, he knew that he could not consent to see Mrs. Salvia fall into her husband's hands. Almeida was his only hope. He must see Almeida, and soon.

In the midst of these reflections he became aware of an unusual silence aboard. The winches had stopped working. He looked at his watch. It was not five o'clock. Surely Cardozo had not dared to interfere with the loading of cargo?

He hurried out on deck. Hendry, red and flustered,

was coming to meet him. On the well-deck below them the stevedores were chattering in excited groups.

"What's the matter now, Mr. Hendry?" he called.

"I can't tell you, sir. It's beyond me. The blighters stopped work. All of a sudden. I can't get any sense out of them."

"Where's the foreman?"

"The swine's slipped off. Can't find him anywhere."

"But that's ridiculous. Is there nobody who can explain?"

A languid Zanzibari in a dirty loin-cloth was dragged forward. His hair was silky, his effeminate features held a trace of Arab fineness.

"This one speaks a few words of English," said Hendry.

Glanvil questioned him. The man smiled softly and waved his hands. He could explain nothing; he only knew what the foreman had told him. There were no more orders from Almeida.

"Do you mean that Almeida ordered you to stop working?"

No; it was not that. Almeida's orders had ceased.

A curious way of putting it, but precise. However he placed his questions, Glanvil could get no other answer. When he suggested that the order to stop might have come from Cardozo the native shook his head emphatically. Cardozo had nothing to do with it. Almeida's orders had ceased. The figure suggested the switching off of a current, a failure of motive power. It was bewildering. They sent him away.

"It beats me altogether, sir," said Hendry. "Everything was going first-rate before this hitch. They don't

seem to understand it themselves. Upon my soul, I don't know what to make of it. I suppose there's nothing to be done."

"Nothing to be done, Mr. Hendry? Of course I must do something. I must go and tackle Almeida at once. Bring his boat round to the gangway."

Cheadle appeared in the background, pale and agitated.

"May I have a word with you, sir?" he asked.

"Later, Mr. Cheadle; I'm just going ashore," Glanvil answered brusquely.

"I can't wait, sir," said Cheadle, choking with emotion. "It's a serious matter. There's four soldiers posted aft here. They denied me entrance to my own engines. I've never heard of such a thing before. It's a matter that's got to be dealt with at once. They threatened to fire on Mr. Macallum. That's an insult to the flag. Never in my life! I look to you to assert yourself, sir." He twined his bony fingers in agitation. "Mr. Hendry, I call you to witness."

But Hendry had gone in search of Almeida's boat.

"You needn't get excited, Mr. Cheadle," Glanvil answered calmly. "The guard has been posted by the governor. Possibly he's within his rights; possibly he isn't. We shall see. In the meantime you had better carry on in the ordinary way. His men have orders to shoot. If you get hit it's your own fault."

"As chief engineer of this ship," Cheadle fumed, "I've a right to know the meaning of all this."

"You've no right to question my orders, Mr. Cheadle. When I come back this evening I'll explain. Ready, Mr. Hendry?"

Hendry, who had just returned, shook his head.

"Almeida's boat has gone, sir. It was here a quarter of an hour ago. I can't make it out."

"Don't try it," said Glanvil. "Tell the bo's'n to launch one of the ship's boats, and see that he gets a move on."

"All that I want to know . . ." Cheadle began again.

Glanvil turned his back on him and left him gaping.

4

Twenty minutes later he stood hammering at Almeida's door. Again and again he beat on it with the wrought-iron knocker. He heard the echoes of his impacts die away along the dark corridor, but nobody came to open for him. He knocked with all his strength, so loudly that it was impossible that he should not be heard if there were ears within. And still no answer.

Hot and frustrated, he made a circle of the house to see if there were any other entrance. It was protected on every side by blank, unscalable walls, so he returned to the street door and renewed his summons.

The silence began to trouble him. He became aware that the few natives who lounged past him down the roadway stared at him with curious eyes and then quickened their steps as though they had witnessed something of ill omen. He called to one of them who seemed in less of a hurry than the others. The fellow heard him, started and took to his heels. It was ridiculous. He had come ashore to see Almeida; he could not return to the ship until he had seen him. At the same time he couldn't stand for ever on the doorstep. Ridiculous—and more

ridiculous still was the sensation, increasing with every moment that he waited, of something uncanny in the emptiness of Almeida's house. He had felt it before; even in Helen Salvia's company he had felt it. Now, as he stood there with a clear and determined mind, it weighed on him with a deliberate heaviness, as though it had been challenged to a test of strength and was showing what it could do. He could accept the physical defeat of the locked door; but this other aggression was one against which he felt bound to struggle. He did so, mustering against it all the powers of reason, and in the effort he felt an admonition of defeat which persuaded him that he was wasting his strength for nothing.

Obviously, too, he was wasting time. If he could not force an interview with Almeida in this way he must try some other. There was none that he could think of. He did not know a soul in the whole of this dead port but Bomba and Cardozo. He could not approach Cardozo unless he were prepared to accept his infamous terms. And Bomba was Cardozo's partner; Bomba must know already that those terms had been rejected. But Bomba, also, he reflected, might be aware of the stoppage in the working of Almeida's cargo, and might be surprised into betraying its cause.

The idea of carrying the war into the enemy's headquarters fascinated Glanvil. At least it would be an unexpected move. He could imagine Bomba's surprise at his appearance; it intrigued him to guess how the Goanese would react to such a stimulus. He pulled his wits together and approached the Refuge, determined to profit by whatever Bomba might say.

Bomba received him with open arms. It seemed, disconcertingly, as if he had been expected. He found himself being coaxed, like a spoilt child, into the spirituous inner chamber. Bomba, always smiling, produced his villainous whisky. Glanvil accepted it. He sat silent and hostile while Bomba danced about him, blinking and purring, talking excitedly in his grotesque jargon of the wreck that the tornado had made of the Indian bazaar: "My poor people, captain; poor people, gentleman!" He dwelt on the horrors that they had suffered with a luscious appreciation; he licked his lips over them. "All good for trade, captain; all good for trade!" he chuckled.

Suddenly he thrust his spectacled face into Glanvil's. "What did I say, captain, what did I say on the first day? By and by, I said, you'd be glad to do business with Bomba. Now you know the name of your best friend. Now you can spit on that Almeida. What did I say? As soon as I heard it I said to myself: 'Now the captain will come along.' And here you are, here you are! All good friends together!"

Glanvil began to wonder what the devil he was talking about; the atmosphere of alcohol in which he lived seemed to have got into the creature's brain. He seemed surprised when Glanvil did not rise to these amicable protestations.

"Ah," he cried, as though he had found an inspiration, "you are offended with Cardozo? Salvia's process; you blame Cardozo for that? No, no, Captain. Let bygones be bygones. Cardozo has a conscience. When Cardozo is official he must do his duty. Was it Cardozo's fault that Salvia smelt money? Listen. Yesterday Salvia

came here full of money that he got out of the lady. First he pay his honest debt. Give him credit, gentleman! Then he make a fantasia. Whisky; champagne; nothing too good for him. Plenty more money coming, he say. I get two thousand dollar for the bitch——"

Glanvil controlled himself with difficulty. Bomba caught his eye and scented danger.

"Two thousand dollar for the lady," he quickly corrected. "I tell you what happened. He goes with the advocate Mourao to Cardozo and makes the process. How can Cardozo refuse? Cardozo think you not do business. But that's all over; all good friends!"

He bunched up his black eyes in an ingratiating smile.

"You think, captain, that Salvia want that woman? Not Salvia! He get all the woman he want and damn cheap too. All Salvia want is money for gin and poker. Now you tear up his process; that's all finish. Cardozo and me, we pay the advocate. You see, I speak honest; that's Bomba! We put our head together, you and me and Cardozo, and we crack that Salvia like a snail. Now we shake hands and talk business."

Glanvil did not respond. Bomba's liquor was in his legs; he was sorry he had taken it; but his head, thank heaven, was clear. He watched the Goanese, with mingled amazement and disgust, crawling round and round him like a cat that circles a caged canary. Were they so confident in the success of their manœuvre that they believed he was ready to come to terms? Was it possible that Bomba had not heard of Cardozo's discomfiture? These questions remained unanswered, for Glanvil's mind was fermenting with a new idea.

From the mass of Bomba's incoherent chatter he had isolated one triumphant and significant fact. Absorbed in his own passion he had imagined that the sight of Helen Salvia had awakened in her husband the desire to repossess her. And he had been mistaken. The fellow was nothing but a common blackmailer, cynical and corruptible. The possibilities revealed by this discovery thrilled and frightened him. If it were only a question of money the matter was simplicity itself. For less than five hundred pounds all his troubles could be solved without the humiliation of yielding to Bomba and Cardozo. It was an enormous sum; but he could meet it, and for the sake of Helen Salvia he was prepared to make a bigger sacrifice than that. This sudden light on his horizon so dazzled him that, for the moment, he had almost forgotten the complication of Almeida's cargo. That must be dealt with first. Beneath the turmoil of these thoughts he heard the voice of Bomba, puzzled but persuasive.

"One more peg, gentleman," he purred, "one chota peg? Pure whisky. Bomba's imported."

With a hurried refusal he rose to his feet. Under the influence of his own excitement or that of Bomba's imported poison the room swayed about him. Bomba clutched at his elbow, as if everything depended on his power to detain him.

"Not going, captain, not going?" he cried. "You come to talk business now?"

Glanvil laughed out loud.

"Not a bit of it, my friend. You're mistaken. I'm going back to finish my talk with Almeida."

He went on laughing to himself as he saw the disappointment that contorted Bomba's face. As he stood gazing down at him he saw the features of the Goanese suffer a transformation: his blinking eyes were wide open and aghast; the colour of his face changed to a dunky pallor; all horror conceivable seemed concentrated in that livid, gaping mask. The creature was sick with terror. If Glanvil had not caught him he would have fallen.

"Steady, there! What the devil's the matter with you?"

"Almeida," Bomba gasped. "You are going to see Almeida?"

"What's to prevent my seeing him?"

"You can't see him," Bomba almost screamed. "Are you mad, captain, are you mad?"

Somewhere there was madness. Glanvil poured out half a tumbler of whisky and held it to Bomba's lips. Bomba pushed it away from him, then staggered to the table and began to chuckle hysterically.

"Ah, you make a joke, captain," he cried. "A good joke. You go and see Almeida. Ha, ha! I understand. You want me to lend you a spade?" He stopped his chuckling suddenly; then, leaning forward, spoke in a hoarse whisper:

"Don't you know, captain, that Almeida is dead?"

"Dead! What do you mean?"

"Dead and buried. Two hours ago they break open the door. Dead many days. They bury him at once. I am undertaker, general sympathetic undertaker. I know what dead men are like. But that——"

He shuddered as he spoke. The delusion, if such it were, was strong enough to shake his whole body in memory.

"If you are not mad, I am," said Glanvil. "Almeida may be dead now, but two days ago he was alive."

Bomba wrung his hands with distress.

"No, no. He has been dead a week. They find his servant, that Zanzibari, in the house with him. He knew when Almeida died. He was afraid to tell."

"Then he was mistaken," said Glanvil. "The day before yesterday I spoke with Almeida."

"Spoke with him when he was dead. I tell you there was nothing left—nothing!"

"He was alive."

"Impossible. You should have seen him. With Almeida even that was possible. Almeida was not a man. Almeida was a devil."

The thing was inconceivable, a nightmare. Glanvil spoke more to himself than to Bomba:

"But yesterday—the day before—every day, the stevedores were working on Almeida's orders. It's fantastic."

"He was a devil," Bomba repeated. "It was his spirit that ordered. A devil, a devil—— You have spoken with a dead man."

"You say that he is buried?"

"It was necessary. Didn't I see him?" Bomba wailed. "Didn't I spit on the devil's grave? You not believe me? I send the boy to show you where he is buried."

Now Glanvil's mind worked quickly in spite of the horror that was in it.

"Tell me this at once," he said. "Who is in charge of Almeida's affairs?"

He had hoped to surprise Bomba, but the Goanese had recovered as quickly as himself.

"Why should I tell you that?" he cried excitedly. "Yes, I will tell you. There is no one. Salvia was the last. Since Salvia went nobody has seen Almeida. Who knows how long he has been dead? You think you have seen him; but who knows that you didn't talk with the devil, who knows?"

Once more Bomba collapsed in obscene and terrified laughter. In the outer chamber of the Refuge the clockwork piano burst into a tune, hideous and triumphant.

CHAPTER FIVE

I

UNDER the blackness of the mango avenue Glanvil tried to collect his thoughts. It was impossible. His brain was hag-ridden by Almeida; the Almeida of their first encounter, cold and insolent; the Almeida whose icy arm he had touched in his dream; the attenuated Almeida who had struggled to express himself two days before; Almeida lying dead under his gauzy catafalque; Almeida buried, and Bomba spitting on his grave. A devil Bomba had called him, and Bomba was right. Now it was impossible to think of him as a living man. The tall prostrate figure, the oracular lips, the honeyed voice; all these, in the light of Bomba's revelations, seemed less—or more—than human. Almeida had been dead a week, said Bomba. Glanvil was almost ready to believe it; to believe that this prepotent spirit, concentrated in isolation, had been able to survive, to transmit an influence hypnotic—one word was as adequate as another—that directed the minds of his servants, not only in Panda, but at a distance, long after his heart had ceased to beat. Like the tentacles of an octopus, Glanvil thought—like the tail of a snake that will go on writhing when its brain has been crushed to pulp. No wonder they hated and feared a mind so monstrous!

Now he was dead, not only the stricken body but the keen malevolent spirit. On lonely inland *shambas* black men dropped their mattocks in a sudden bewilderment; on board the *Vega* the stevedores ceased work; the tentacles into which that restless energy poured had relaxed.

Glanvil could not measure the extent of the resulting chaos. Only, as far as it concerned him, he saw that it was his duty to extricate himself from the wreckage of Almeida's machine. Bomba had told him that there was nobody left to direct Almeida's affairs. With any other man than Almeida he would not have believed it. In Almeida's case it was probably true. He heard the echo of Almeida's words: "I do not delegate authority."

He began to realize that this circumstance strengthened his own position. In the holds of the *Vega* more than four hundred tons of valuable produce were already stowed. The bills of lading were in order, the cargo consigned to a firm in Liverpool whose name he knew. Who was responsible for the freightage? To whom did the cargo belong? This question, the first that his owners would ask, he could not answer—neither, heaven be thanked, could Almeida's enemies ashore. Possession, in this case, was nine points of the law. If Cardozo and his friends disputed it, making an excuse of the unsettled condition of Almeida's affairs to detain him, he could confound them with Almeida's signature.

Thinking of this weapon he suddenly remembered how Hendry had called his attention to the dates on the documents that Almeida had signed; they had been completed three weeks before the *Vega's* arrival at Panda. Was this another example of Almeida's cunning? Was it pos-

sible that this supernatural intelligence had foreseen its coming extinction?

He rigorously shelved the temptation to follow these byways. It was his duty to concentrate on the practical aspects of the case; and these seemed plain enough. The rest of Almeida's cargo would never be loaded. It was his duty to his owners' interest to stick to all that he held. Sooner or later the question of freightage would arise; and there, at any rate, he stood on firm ground, for the value of the cargo was sufficient to pay for its transport to the ends of the earth. It was his duty, also, to avoid further complications. As soon as he returned to the ship he would give orders to Hendry to batten down the hatches. He would make good his escape from Panda before Cardozo and his friends had time to trouble him.

He discovered that he had been reasoning like a fool. In his concentration on Almeida he had completely forgotten the guard which Cardozo had placed over the engine-room, and the threat of Salvia's process. He saw that he could not raise an inch of steam until this matter was settled. Luckily, Bomba had pointed the way. At whatever cost, and at the earliest moment, Salvia must be squared.

By this time his meditations had brought him automatically to the water's edge. The night was calm, with no threat of rain. The long tresses of casuarina sighed softly, as with content. For a moment he stood there, lulled by their sound and by the lapping of waves, wondering if he had not better take advantage of the fair night to set out again in search of Salvia. Time was precious, and yet it seemed to him that he could face this

problem better on the morrow; he even felt that he could address himself to it more efficiently when he had taken Cheadle and Hendry into his confidence; and, behind all these considerations, he was driven by a desire to set eyes once more on Helen Salvia whom he had not seen since the night before.

He shouted for his boatman. Nobody answered him. Only out on the dark water that lay between him and the *Vega* he heard a steady plashing of oars. Another boat was approaching the shore. It came nearer, and in the starlight he saw a tall figure in white ducks standing up in the bows. His mind leapt to meet some new anxiety. The man in the boat was of Harvey's height. He was needed on board. They had sent Harvey on shore to fetch him. He moved down to meet him.

"Hallo!" he called. "Is that you, Harvey? This is Captain Glanvil. Do you want me?"

There was no answer. The rowers quickened their stroke, gathering way with which to beach their boat. She ran in softly on to the sand, and as she grounded the tall man in the bows jumped ashore, taking the landing in his stride, like a hurdler, making straight for Glanvil without a word. Before Glanvil knew what was happening he was on him. His arm went up; Glanvil saw the glint of a knife and heard the ripping of his coat-shoulder as the blade went through it. His fingers gripped the wrist of the hand that held the knife. They swayed, standing, then Glanvil's assailant overbalanced and they rolled over together on the sand, desperately grappling. The boatmen watched them with complete disinterest as they struggled, panting and snarling like two fighting

dogs. Suddenly the knife shot through the air and fell with a tinkle on the roadway. Out of a cloud of flying sand Glanvil emerged on top; he had mastered the other's wrists, his knee pressed downward like a vice on the other's throat, and above it, a bearded face, strained backward and contorted, stared up at him with bulging eyes. He had seen that face before. He gazed at it, gasping for breath, incapable of speech. It was Salvia!

The whole struggle had not lasted two seconds. It took Glanvil another to realize that the body that writhed helplessly beneath him was now fighting not for mastery, but for life—that unless he relaxed his pressure the man would be throttled. He struggled to his feet breathless and bewildered. Salvia's hands fell back limply on the sand. For a moment he did not move; then slowly, like a creature roused from sleep, propped himself upon his elbow.

"Bad luck," he gasped. "I nearly had you that time."

The words were so matter of fact that Glanvil heard himself laugh. The fellow knew that he was beaten. Evidently, too, he had been drinking. He sat up and tugged at his neck-band, as though the pressure of Glanvil's knee still embarrassed his breath.

"Nearly settled me, too," he muttered, half-humorously and with the faintest of foreign accents. "My God, yes! That was a near shave!"

It sounded as if he were talking to himself. So much detachment sounded curious in a man who had just failed in an attempt to murder. There was something almost admirable in the cold-bloodedness with which he recov-

ered himself. He seemed, in fact, far less perturbed than Glanvil himself, and Glanvil, curiously enough, was too dazed to feel any anger. He stood fascinated by Salvia's face; wondering, as he gazed at it in the dim light, what kind of man this could be whom Helen Salvia had loved. The contemplation of it paralyzed him; he had to force himself to face the probability of another tigerish spring as Salvia slowly pulled himself to his feet. But Salvia had shot his bolt. The murderous insanity had flashed up and died away in him. He seemed to be regarding Glanvil with something of the same curiosity as Glanvil had given him. He spoke dispassionately in a low husky voice.

"So you're the captain, are you? I didn't get you the other night. Either I was too tight or else the shock of seeing her." He hesitated; his eyes were set on Glanvil as if he were puzzled to account for his existence. "What I want to know is," he went on, still speaking to himself, "why the hell did I want to knife you? Eh? I've no quarrel with you. I've nothing against you. It just came over me when you said your name. Off my nut, eh? That's Almeida's fault. Almeida. Friend of yours." He gave a weak laugh. "You and I have got something in common, captain," he chuckled. "Have had, I should say. Something in common——"

The tone of his address took Glanvil's breath away. That he should stand listening to Salvia, to a man who, two minutes before, had sprung at his throat with a knife, to the author of Helen Salvia's sorrows, was fantastic. Evidently Salvia expected him to make some answer. He

couldn't do it. The man was drunk or mad; none the less pitiable for that. And how the shadow of Almeida pursued him!

"Best shake hands on it," Salvia was saying.

Glanvil edged away from him. It seemed to him that Salvia's movements were dangerous. His mind made a swift note of the direction in which the knife had fallen. Salvia's were quick to follow them. He laughed, scornfully, as he came up within an arm's length.

"Put that in your pocket," he said, "I make you a present of it. Why should you be suspicious? And why should we quarrel, eh? About a woman? No, you're welcome to her." He seemed to be scrutinizing Glanvil's face. "How old are you? Not old enough, apparently, to have learnt that one woman's as good as another. I don't want her, I tell you. Not that much! It's finished. Only one thing I do want, and that's money. Money to get away from Almeida and out of this inferno. Let's be friendly. Don't let us talk of women."

Calmly he struck a match and held it up in his cupped hand to light the stump of a cigar. Its yellow flame illumined his face, showing him unkempt and very pale. There was no streak of grey in his coarse black hair and beard; under the moustache his bloodless lips were set in a fine curve, his black pupils contracted to the light within irises of tawny amber, hard, glittering, like those of a bird or of a snake. Even out of his present degradation emerged the classic regularity of feature, the classic poise of body and limb of a race that had sculptured gods in its own image. In years he was younger than Glanvil; in instinctive knowledge older by centuries. Beneath his

pity and disgust Glanvil was aware of this. Through the debasement he saw the original fineness; saw, in a flash, why Helen Salvia had loved him for what he had once been. It was impossible to guess how much Panda and Almeida had destroyed.

It seemed almost as if the mind of Salvia scented this tolerance and was quick to adapt it to its own ends. He laid his hand softly on Glanvil's arm in a movement caressingly sinister.

"Don't let us talk of women," he repeated. "Let's get down to rock bottom. To money. I'll tell you the truth: take it or leave it. What happened just now was an accident, a matter of impulse. I didn't go off to the ship to knife you. I went to talk business. It's early. If you have time to spare why shouldn't we see where we stand? You'll come with me, eh?"

Glanvil, stiffened rather than disarmed by this familiarity, consented. The time seemed propitious. For the moment the idea of revenge seemed to have been shaken out of Salvia's mind. The passionate impulse had given way to his deep-seated, desperate cupidity. His mind, to judge by the good-humoured frankness of his speech, was just a little fuddled. He had taken a lesson; his fall had shaken the quarrelsomeness out of him. The chance of such amenity might not return.

Salvia seemed delighted at his acquiescence.

"So we will make a bargain, eh? Compliments on your intelligence! It is in your interest as well as mine. Together we shall get the better of Cardozo. That's a reward in itself. It was Cardozo that asked me to start the process against you. Cardozo is keen. I don't ask

him what is behind it; but one thing I know, and that is that Bomba and Cardozo will expect to get their pickings. That is where we come in. We can give them the slip, eh? and settle everything with old Mourao. Not too bad for a Portuguese, Mourao. We will go to his house."

Glanvil felt that he must go through with the adventure. The death of Almeida had increased the value of time. What was more, the way in which he had met Salvia, the very man whom it was his immediate duty to seek, inspired him with a fatalistic—perhaps a fantastic—belief in the wisdom of taking all risks and opportunities as they came. This superstition was inherent in his nature. He had always relied, in a tight corner, on the efficacy of the moment's inspiration. Sometimes it had betrayed him—had not the whole of his present predicament arisen from the seed of such an impulse? Sometimes, beyond hope, as in his encounter with Helen Salvia two nights before, it had succeeded.

Together they crossed the lighted end of the Avenida, cutting off to eastward, in the direction of the fort, along a narrow lane, unlit and sinister. Glanvil's free hand wandered instinctively to his hip pocket seeking the bulge of his automatic. The pocket was empty. Had the pistol been lost in the struggle on the sand, or had Salvia, with the cunning of a Neapolitan Camorrist, extracted it? It was uncomfortable for Glanvil to feel himself unarmed; but to show any discomposure would only have called attention to his disarmament. It became less comfortable still as the lane which they had entered contracted, between high walls, to a width in which two men could

barely walk abreast. If Salvia contemplated another assault he could not have chosen a better place for it. Feeling every moment that he was more deeply involved Glanvil resisted with difficulty an impulse to stop and turn back. Such a movement would be likely to precipitate the attack, if one were coming, so he decided that it was wiser to hold his hand. He developed, in the darkness, an acuity of hearing and touch, a sort of jungle-sense, that kept him warned of his companion's movements of body if not of mind. It was this new instinct that suddenly detected in front of them a thickening in the darkness which might well represent the end of a blind alley. At the same moment Salvia fell a step behind. The movement cut off Glanvil's retreat. He stopped dead, and Salvia, who had not allowed for this, came abreast again. For the first time in their journey Glanvil spoke:

"Where are we going?"

"Are you afraid?" Salvia sneered.

"I'm not such a fool that I cannot see risks."

Salvia laughed softly. "I don't agree with you. A wise man doesn't show the weakness of his hand. However, you want me to lead? Very good; I will go first. We are nearly there."

He stepped on in front, putting into this exchange of position a swagger that made Glanvil angry. When it came to villainy he preferred it without graces.

"This is the house," said Salvia, in a tone almost of patronage. "You see that you need not have been alarmed. If you can oblige me with a match——"

Salvia was speaking with a scornful ease which sug-

gested that Glanvil's hesitation had given him an advantage. His enunciation was no longer blurred by drink or excitement; each word was formed with an elegance that put Glanvil's roughness to shame. He struck a match, suspicious, once more, of Salvia's intentions, for the movement put his hands out of action. Its light showed him that the blind end of the alley was occupied by a wooden door as massive as that which defended Almeida's house, pierced, at the level of a man's eyes, by an aperture fitted with an iron grille, beneath which a narrow strip of brass revealed the name of Mourao, Advocate and Notary. This further evidence of good faith which Salvia so dramatically displayed convinced Glanvil that his caution had been ungenerous. He stood aside while Salvia thundered at an iron knocker, and waited.

They had not long to wait. Without any warning of footsteps the door was opened by a tall figure in a grey crash suit. It was that of an elderly man; the greyness of his clothes found its counterpart in his thin hair, his pointed beard, and even in the hue of his skin, which was colourless except for the yellow-pigmented circles round his eyes. These, also, were grey and dreamy, the irises ringed by the milky arc of age. The appearance of these nocturnal visitors did not seem to surprise him. He greeted Salvia with a short nod, reserving for Glanvil a bow full of sober dignity.

Salvia began talking in rapid Portuguese. It was in Glanvil's mind to protest against the employment of a language that he could not understand, but he realized, as quickly, that silence was better tactics. He heard his own name, and caught a glance of deferent interest from

Mourao, who waved them inward to an office bare of all furniture but chairs and one enormous desk.

Isolated by his ignorance of the language that they were speaking, Glanvil felt it his duty to make his position clear, interrupting Salvia in the middle of an impassioned speech.

"I have no time to waste in preliminaries," he said. "First of all, you and the advocate obviously have me at a disadvantage. I don't understand everything that you are saying. I take it that Senhor Mourao does not speak English?"

Mourao shook his head. Evidently he understood as much as that.

"In that case," Glanvil continued, turning to Salvia, "I shall be glad if you will translate everything you say."

"Certainly I will do so," Salvia acquiesced. "This is a matter of honour. We are all three gentlemen. I must ask you to trust me."

It was easy to put it like that. Without prejudice Glanvil assented.

"The matter is a simple one," he said. "You have taken out a summons against me, nominally for the return of your wife. You are suing me for two thousand dollars damage. That is, roughly, four hundred pounds. I gather that you are prepared to settle the matter out of court for a sum that we are here to discuss. Kindly translate that to Mr. Mourao."

He waited while Salvia did so. Mourao listened, nodding his head from time to time as he took in the points of Glanvil's speech.

"All that we have to decide on," Glanvil continued, "is

the precise figure. Personally I consider your demand extravagant. I am prepared to offer you two hundred pounds."

"Impossible!" Salvia rose from his chair in agitation. Mourao pondered in judicial silence. Glanvil was watching Salvia narrowly. The flush that had risen to his cheeks was not only that of indignation. Glanvil believed that, if he read him rightly, the mere mention of the sum that he rejected had intoxicated him. To a man so reduced in poverty as Salvia five hundred pounds was no more comprehensible than one, since either assured the gratification of every immediate desire, and one above all others—the desire to escape from Panda. Would this desire have been so impelling if he had known that Almeida was dead? Glanvil could not guess. In any case, Salvia's ignorance of this was an asset not to be squandered.

"I do not want to drive a hard bargain," Salvia said at last. "Let us be reasonable. We will say three hundred."

"In that case," Glanvil bluffed, "the matter is not worth discussing."

He took out his cheque-book and laid it on the desk. Salvia's eyes followed him greedily.

"What I propose doing," Glanvil continued, "is to draw you a cheque for two hundred pounds on Lloyds Bank at Brixham. A cheque on London would be more easily negotiable, but I have no London account. Brixham is my home—a small town in Devonshire."

"I know, I know," said Salvia eagerly. "I have lived at Torquay."

"Then you will understand," said Glanvil. He complimented himself on the cunning that had inspired him to mention the name of Brixham, knowing that its familiar sound would bring the actuality of the bargain nearer to Salvia's imagination. He opened the cheque-book and took a pen from his pocket. He wrote the word Salvia on the counterfoil. Salvia, who had been watching him all the time as he had been pacing to and fro, sat down suddenly.

"Two hundred and fifty," he said.

"Two hundred," Glanvil repeated.

Mourao looked from one to the other with his lifeless eyes. And Glanvil, hearing his own words, was amazed at the fantastic nature of the whole scene. His thoughts were suddenly transported to the bank at Brixham, and its manager, to whom he had often spoken as he walked into town in the morning from his house on the Berry Head Road. Some day, perhaps in three months' time, the cheque which lay before him on the table would return to Brixham from the clearing house; the manager would glance at his signature, and stamp the back of the paper slip with the date and the name of his branch, just in the ordinary routine of business, never guessing for one moment the conditions under which it had been signed. Indeed, in these modern days, and under a modern civilization, those conditions were unconceivable. If, in a moment of caprice, he had made a note on the cheque *Purchase of Helen Salvia,* the manager, and most reasonable Englishmen, would conclude that he was mad. The proceeding was extravagant; he even doubted if it were legal. The indignity to Mrs. Salvia, the barbarism

that such a signature condoned, distressed him. Yet there he sat between Salvia and the grey Mourao, pen in hand.

"In return for my cheque of two hundred pounds," he heard himself continue, "you will immediately withdraw your civil process against me. That, I imagine, is quite in order. Please ask Mourao to confirm."

Salvia obeyed him. His ready compliance seemed to Glanvil a good omen. The fellow was still hypnotized by the sight of that pink cheque; he had never taken his eyes off it. As he spoke to Mourao the lawyer nodded gravely. "He says that in a criminal process such a bargain would be a felony; in a civil it is quite permissible," Salvia translated.

"Very good," Glanvil answered. "But that is not enough. I also want an undertaking, signed by you in our presence, that the process shall not be renewed, and an assurance that your wife and myself shall be free from any molestation until we sail. I very much doubt if that can be effected legally, whether it can be made binding. Ask Mourao."

Again Salvia complied. With wavings of his long grey hands Mourao explained that such an arrangement could not be enforced by law. "It was a matter of personal honour," he said.

Glanvil caught at these intelligible words.

"Exactly," he broke in; "personal honour. That is the difficulty."

Salvia jumped to his feet indignantly.

"Please remember," Glanvil explained, "that I am

making this arrangement with a man who attempted to murder me half an hour ago."

"I am a gentleman," Salvia protested. For the moment his indignation seemed real, he looked it.

"No, that is not enough," said Glanvil. "I must protect myself. For that reason I propose post-dating this cheque. I don't know if you understand what that means. To put it shortly: no money will be paid to you until the date on which I fix—approximately the date of your wife's arrival in England."

Salvia became agitated.

"That does not suit me," he said. "You are ready to protect yourself. Why should not I do the same? How do I know that you will not order the cheque to be dishonoured? No, sir, I am not altogether a fool."

For a moment Glanvil thought in silence.

"I will make another concession," he said at last. "The cheque shall be made payable immediately to a third person—Senhor Mourao, for example. It shall be made negotiable for the day on which I leave Panda. Not before. In the meantime you are at liberty to cable to England if you wish to be sure that the account is in credit. How will that suit you?"

Salvia shook his head. The prospect of handling money was what appealed to him.

"If your process continues, even if you win it," Glanvil warned him, "you will have to wait much longer than that for your money."

"I understand that," said Salvia shortly. "Again I remind you that I am not altogether a fool. I want to

feel the money in my hands. Give me fifty pounds in Bank of England notes. On those terms I will take your two hundred."

Glanvil took out his pocket-book and extracted two five-pound notes, which he placed on the desk between him and Salvia. Deliberately he appealed to Salvia's cupidity through his eyes. "You can take these," he said, "and the balance of one hundred and ninety in a cheque made payable to Senhor Mourao on the day I sail. This is my last proposal. Take it or leave it."

Salvia stretched out his hand and clutched the crinkling paper. His eyes actually brightened at the sound.

"On those conditions," he said, with a certain dignity, "I accept."

Glanvil sighed heavily. It was with difficulty that he disguised his elation.

"I think you have done wisely," he said. "Now we had better draw up a document in duplicate—English and Portuguese. It shall be signed and witnessed in the presence of Senhor Mourao. Then I will hand over the cheque to him. Please give me a sheet of paper. Afterwards you can translate my version into Portuguese for the advocate's benefit."

Salvia spoke rapidly to Mourao, who handed him a sheet of stamped paper. His hand trembled as he passed it to Glanvil. Slowly, without the shadow of a tremor, Glanvil wrote:

In consideration of the payment to me, Lorenzo Salvia, of a cheque on Brixham, value £190 *and* £10 *in Bank of England notes, I agree:*

1. *To withdraw immediately the proceedings already instituted against G. Glanvil.*

2. *To inform the Authorities at Panda that this has been done and to see that the guard placed on board the S.S. Vega is removed.*

3. *To renounce all claim on the person of my wife, Helena Salvia, to allow her to proceed to Europe on board the S.S. Vega without further molestation to herself or to any of the Vega's crew.*

Signed at Panda, Province of Mozambique, in the presence of Señor Mourao, Advocate, and G. Glanvil, Master S.S. Vega.

He handed the draft to Salvia.

"Kindly make a copy of this in Portuguese," he said, "so that the advocate can understand it. In the meantime I will write a cheque. Mr. Mourao's name? Emilio? Very good. I think we will have both copies in duplicate. Safer. Let me know when yours is finished. I shall want to look at it."

It was not that he could understand anything that Salvia had written—beyond the numerals he knew nothing of the language—but it seemed to him important that he should appear intelligently interested. He had not long to wait. Salvia had quickly finished translation and duplicate. The fellow had brains enough, no doubt of that. And always, between them, Mourao sat with a grey solemnity that was becoming ridiculous.

Glanvil struggled through the Portuguese version word by word. Both copies were signed and witnessed. His cheque, the most fantastic document to which Glanvil

had ever put his signature, was safe in Mourao's pocket; the notes crinkled in Salvia's. And Salvia was aware of them. It was extraordinary to see how the mere contact with money—and no great sum at that—affected Salvia's head. He began to swagger, he became flamboyant, treating Mourao with a sweeping noisy politeness, and Glanvil as an old friend. His behaviour aroused in Glanvil an instinctive antagonism that made him brusquer than ever. He cut Salvia short in the middle of a compliment:

"Mourao goes with me to Cardozo?" he asked.

"Certainly," Salvia assured him. "I will come too."

"One is enough, and I prefer Mourao. He acts as my lawyer, and I pay his fee."

Salvia, still dazed with the thought of money, took the snub quietly. If he and Glanvil were not actually the best of friends, their relation was sufficiently intimate to claim his generosity. At the corner of the Avenida he left Glanvil and Mourao to themselves, reluctantly, but with an aggrieved politeness. Obviously he would have liked to swagger through every stage of the matter. With fluent protestations of devotion he left them, drifting on the stream of habit like a straw in the direction of Bomba.

Glanvil and Mourao proceeded in silence to Cardozo's house. The servants opened with deference to Mourao. Cardozo, for the moment, was invisible. They waited in a wired loggia, over the ceiling of which enormous flat lizards darted like shadows of moths thrown upward. They stood there patiently, having no common language but that of gesture in which the proficiency of Mourao

put Glanvil to shame. Through it he managed to convey the information that the shrill voice that lashed an invisible Cardozo in an adjoining room was that of the governor's wife; and a moment later, when Cardozo himself appeared, Glanvil saw behind him the curious eyes of a fat woman, with a tape pulled round the waist-line of her chemise, in whose face Cardozo vindictively slammed the door behind him.

The sight of Glanvil, whose name had not been announced, astonished Cardozo. Glanvil, who found it a relief to speak English after so much of Mourao's polished silence, told him what had happened.

"The process, as you see, is abandoned. You will please give orders for your guard to be withdrawn this evening."

Cardozo examined Salvia's agreement first with bewilderment, then with annoyance. In his own house he might be despised; outside it, his right to interfere in everything, and particularly in anything susceptible to commission, was not to be questioned. It was evident, however, that he found it politic to respect Mourao's share in the pickings.

"By all means," he said courteously, "I am delighted to read this. I will accompany you to the ship myself. But first you will favour me and the advocate by taking a glass of wine?"

Glanvil refused. He had no time for compliments.

"My visit is official," he added. "Senhor Mourao deals with the legal aspect of the case. All I ask of you is that the guard shall be removed."

Cardozo consented with a cheerful readiness. Perhaps the memory of the lady in the chemise encouraged him. A uniform, he said, was necessary. Three minutes would suffice.

In ten he reappeared. Glanvil had never known him so friendly, and was not long in discovering the reason.

"It displeases me," Cardozo said, as soon as they were afloat, "that you should have found yourself dragged into this vendetta. A local feud; you can have no idea of its bitterness. Now that is all over. Almeida is dead. Almeida was the wolf. Now the people of Panda will lie down like lambs. Only the influence of that man prevented Panda from being a second Eden. To be associated with him meant ostracism. Now you will be welcomed everywhere, even in the most select society."

Glanvil laughed. "I am sailing to-morrow," he said.

"To-morrow? You cannot leave us as abruptly as that," Cardozo urged. "But of course you are joking. You do not mean it. It is no use trying to disguise from me that the confusion of Almeida's affairs affects you. I will be candid. I know that a third of Almeida's cargo has not been delivered to you. And I can help you. The mouse that helped the lion! I can supply the deficiency. The cargo about which we were talking the other day . . ."

"I am not interested in it," Glanvil told him.

"At least listen to me," Cardozo persuaded. "What I have to say is in your interest as well as my own. I have had messages this evening from the next village, Kigombe; three dhows full of copra have arrived to-night from

Manchui. Others follow. Everything is coming quickly by land and sea. I can begin loading to-morrow. I am ready to pay you a higher rate than Almeida. Frankly, I am now in a position to make up for everything that you may have lost by Almeida's collapse."

He waited to see the effect of his proposals. Glanvil answered nothing.

"Now that Salvia's process is done with," Cardozo continued, "you can have no possible reason for fear. I make you a definite offer. Within three days I promise you three hundred tons of mixed cargo. You cannot conscientiously refuse."

Cardozo had timed his proposals cleverly. Cornered in the stern of the boat Glanvil could not help listening; and, as he listened, he was forced to confess that Cardozo was talking excellent sense. The death of Almeida had left him with a bad bargain which it was his obvious duty to his owners to improve, and Cardozo pointed the way. If Cardozo, for once, spoke the truth, if the three hundred tons of which he spoke were actually on shore and in the bottoms of his dhows, he had no right to refuse it. Of course he did not believe Cardozo's story of the opportune arrival. Probably, he reflected, the governor had taken advantage of the confusion following Almeida's death to lay hands on the remnants of his property. It was not Glanvil's business to inquire too closely where the copra came from. If it were offered to him at advantageous rates it was his duty to accept it.

He kept Cardozo in suspense until they reached the gangway.

"I am ready to accept your cargo," he told him at last, "always provided that there is no delay in its delivery. You must start work at dawn to-morrow."

"Certainly," Cardozo eagerly agreed. "That is understood."

"You will pay fifteen per cent. in excess of the rates current in Mozambique. The figure must be settled at once. How can you ascertain it?"

"That is simplicity itself: I will telegraph this evening as soon as I get ashore."

"You told me," Glanvil reminded him, "that the wires were down."

"That," said Cardozo, smiling and unashamed, "was an inexactitude."

Within half an hour of their arrival on board the *Vega* the governor and his carabineers had gone.

2

For two nights and a day Helen Salvia had not stirred from the cabin that had become her refuge and her purgatory. Staggering along the deck under Cheadle's escort on the night of the deluge she had not known where she was going. When he addressed her in his flat and kindly northern speech, she saw herself answering with words and gestures that had no more relation to her feelings than those of a stage-part learned by rote. Thanks to the slovenliness of Rennels, she found her cabin exactly as she had left it, the soiled sheets on the bunk, and, on the locker, a heap of pitiful rubbish that she had discarded twelve hours before. Cheadle left her. Mechanically

she began to divest Gina of her sodden clothes. The child had whimpered herself to sleep in Glanvil's arms and resented this new disturbance, struggling and staring at her mother with the eyes of a changeling; but as soon as she was stripped and dried, and wrapped in a sheet, she curled herself up on the locker like a kitten and fell asleep once more.

No doubt she was too exhausted even for terror. It was better so; and yet the absorption of Gina into another world, of strange, unnatural placidity, seemed to Helen Salvia a crowning injustice. Now she was utterly alone, divorced from the sympathy of the one creature on whom she had a right to rely. Gazing, almost stupidly, at the child asleep, she became conscious of a jealousy, stronger than pity or maternal tenderness, that this creature whom she loved more passionately than anything on earth, flesh of her own body, should be dissociated from her agony. She had always looked upon Gina as a thing peculiarly her own, incapable of a separate existence; but the eyes that had stared into hers, full of resentment, were the black eyes of Salvia, the eyes of the brown baby in the swamp, hostile and alien. She felt that she had been betrayed. She could almost have hated them.

It was madness. Could it be that this maternal passion, her last hope, was no more than an animal instinct, yielding to the first demands of self-interest? In that case better she had been dead. Shuddering, she undressed and lay down on the bunk. She dared not turn off the light; she dared not close her eyes. She dreaded the further isolation of darkness. The only anchor for her distracted mind was the sight of physical surroundings

with which, in her days of sanity, she had been familiar; the light that showed through the bulkhead which separated her from Macallum's cabin, the mirror that had reflected her features when they were happy, the folds of curtain that separated her from the empty alley-way. To these things, stable and material, she strove to attach herself with an energy born of despair.

It was useless. Time after time, with the relentlessness of a gathering wave, the memory of what she had suffered during that day rose black within her, and washed her away into a terror and confusion apart from normal consciousness. It was no longer night. Instead of the dim cabin in which her body lay, she saw the blinding light of early morning on the edge of Salvia's clearing; she saw the grass hut, and in its doorway the figure of Salvia seated with the naked brown baby playing at his feet. And when he saw her Salvia staggered to his feet and ran to meet them. He had no eyes for her; his eyes were fixed on Gina. He caught the child up in his arms, hungrily, as if he would eat her; he pressed her brown face into his, babbling the baby Italian which she remembered like a dream, his hands greedily fingered her whole body, his lips were insatiable for her soft flesh. It had struck her that she should be proud of this eager possession. But she was not proud. It revolted her; it made her feel sick. It sickened and revolted her to see that Gina did not resent this savagery. She saw their four dark eyes together. Wildness and anger came into her brain. This savage, this stranger had stolen Gina from her. Salvia was laughing like a madman. She did not know him. Even as she lay there, stiff in her bunk, she

could have screamed aloud; but nobody would have heard her cry more than that which one utters in a dream.

It was over. The wave passed, leaving her high and dry and gasping. She saw once more the mirror, the light in Macallum's bulkhead, the flaccid curtain over the door. She clutched at them as she might have clutched at a floating spar; but before she could gain breath another wave was on her, sweeping her helpless into the interior of the grass hut.

Salvia was speaking in his admirable unnatural English. He laughed as he spoke; he could not keep his hands off Gina's body, but his eyes were black and desperate as they met hers and made her tremble. Out in the clearing she heard the sound of the black woman's pestle steadily pounding mealies; the floor of the hut was littered with stripped cobs. He was asking her for money. She told him that she had none. It was a lie; but then she was so frightened, so revolted. His eyes swept over her scornfully, appraising, rejecting. She could see that he had no other use for her. And her refusal unloosed a flood of foulness from his tongue. Had she learnt lying as well as prostitution? Had she come to Panda with any pretensions of innocence thinking that he was a fool? Did she expect him to believe her rather than his own sisters in Naples who had seen the whole of her degradation? Why, her very face showed him the life she had been living; it was dissipation that had turned her old. Bestiality showed itself in her eyes, and for that, for that she had neglected this poor innocent! Not only in Naples; what about the officers of the *Vega?* Was he to believe that sailors respected virtue? That captain? Glanvil? He

had the name—no fear of that!—and would make him pay for it too. Not that it mattered to him what she had done with herself. At least he had got the child—his Gina, his darling, his little treasure, he declared, smothering her with maudlin kisses. As for herself, he had finished with her. She could take her goods wherever she wanted—there were plenty of brothels in Panda, and railwaymen for patrons with money to burn. But since she had traded on his property, he had a certain right to share in the proceeds. . . . Money. . . . Money! Her lies might do for a drunken sailor, but not for him. A woman of her kind would never spend as much as she earned. He knew her and her mean English ways!

Still she denied it. And then, suddenly dropping the child, he had sprung upon her like a beast. In a flash of dreadful remembrance she realized how she had once melted with happiness in those arms. He had no pity on her cries, paid no heed to her feeble denials. Savagely he had stripped her clothes from her, and torn from the pocket in which she had sewn them her little hoard of paper money. In the midst of this degrading struggle the pounding of the pestle had ceased. Through the doorway of the hut she had seen the curious eyes of the black woman peering in at the doorway. A blow on the temple sent her spinning into a corner, where she lay feigning unconsciousness like an animal.

When she opened her eyes Salvia had gone. He had taken Gina with him. She pressed her hands to her eyes. If only she could tear this vision away from her brain. She must not think of it . . . she must not. If it con-

tinued she would go mad. A wild impulse swept her mind. She could only escape from it in the blank of death. So easy! To run out on to the empty deck and throw herself and her troubles into that dark water. She raised herself, trembling, to the edge of the bunk; and as she did so the horror vanished. In place of it, in a calm that was almost as devastating as frenzy, she saw the body of Gina curled up on the locker with one protective forearm folded across her eyes. Here was clear evidence; it was over; she had escaped and taken her child with her. In the madness of her vision it had seemed to her that Gina was not part of her, only an emanation of Salvia's hostile body. Now, in the contemplation of Gina's sleeping innocence, she knew how madly wicked, how perverted such a thought had been. The existence of this child was now the only thing that bound her to life and sanity. Her heart was wounded by the wrong that it had conceived. In a flood of overpowering compassion she felt that nothing could heal it but to take Gina in her arms and press her to her breast with something of the same passion as that which Salvia had shown. She had almost yielded to this impulse when she realized that it would be selfish to disturb a sleep which this little creature needed as much as she did, and so she checked it, contenting her eyes with gazing, passionately persuading herself that however much of Salvia might have entered into Gina's body, the child's soul was born and shaped and nourished by her own. With this consuming tenderness, this longing unassuaged by the satisfaction of physical contact, tears came again into

her eyes, and she could have wept again with joy at their coming, for they showed her, at least, that she was a woman and more than a mad, distressful spirit.

She even felt that now she might possibly sleep; but even as she closed her eyes she knew her insecurity, and a moment later her hopes went crashing before another assault from the dark powers of memory. It was afternoon. The swamp slept under a white, hot sky. Not a bird, not an insect broke its tyrannous siesta with any sound; only the grass roof of the banda crackled as though it might suddenly break into clear flame. Still she lay dazed in the corner of the hut where Salvia had thrown her. She heard his voice outside ranting at the black girl in a language that she did not understand. She knew that he was angry, and trembled, fearing some new violence. He entered. He took no more notice of her prostrate figure than if she had been dead. He threw himself upon the charpoy; she heard the thongs of leather creak under his weight. Then he began talking Italian, and she knew, without seeing, that he still hugged Gina in his arms. Now there was no anger in his voice. It was gentle and caressing; there were tones in it that had often thrilled her in her dreams; it seemed as though a miracle had suddenly restored him to his old self, as if all that had happened during that ghastly morning were also a dream. He began singing in the Neapolitan dialect a song with which children are put to sleep, and when he did not sing he talked incessantly with the drawl that always came into his voice when he had been drinking. The child answered him shyly, laughing when he devoured her with his kisses; but her laughter was old and false, the laughter

not of a child, but of a woman who defends herself in the grip of fear. She herself could not have been capable of such self-possession. Only the instinctive inheritance of centuries of half-Oriental civilization could have made it possible. She held her breath and listened. Little by little Salvia's voice grew drowsy; he yawned; he grunted; he snored. Even when she knew that he was asleep she could not open her eyes, she could not move a muscle to help herself; not because the fall had bruised her limbs, but because her spirit was paralyzed. She saw the opportunity of escaping present itself, and could not take it. It would have been better, she thought, if he had killed her.

And then came a sweet miracle. Unwarned by any sound, she felt upon her lips the pressure of a soft kiss that stirred her more deeply than any spoken word. Gina had freed herself from Salvia's arms, and crept like a mouse to her side. The cunning of this manœuvre in so small a creature almost frightened her, but no other emotion could match the thankfulness that rose in her heart. By that kiss she knew that something at least had been saved from the wreckage of her life, that though the child had submitted to Salvia's embraces she still belonged to her, and in this wild renewal of hope her soul began to live again. She gathered Gina passionately in her arms. They lay close together without need of words. Little by little the power to think returned to her; the idea of escape formed itself, then crystallized into a purpose.

She whispered in Gina's ear. The child understood. With the utmost caution she rose to her knees, then to her feet. Hugging the wall of the banda, which seemed,

curiously enough, to give her a feeling of protection, they moved quietly and by slow degrees towards the doorway. Salvia still slept; she did not dare to look at him. They drew near to the doorway, to the blazing white silence of the clearing. A sound startled her. Salvia had moved. Her muscles stiffened into a catalepsy of fear; there was no more life in her than in the wooden post against which she leaned; but she knew in her heart that she had failed, that Salvia was awake. Even though her back was turned to him she felt that his eyes were on her. She waited for the new storm of violence to break. The silence dragged on intolerably, indefinitely; it seemed as if they were all suspended in a trance. And then came worse than violence.

In that moment of suspension she could not guess what had been passing through Salvia's fuddled mind. In the next, with a distaste more nauseating than any she had ever experienced, she knew that he was making love to her. Against his strength she was powerless. Her struggles only seemed to whet his re-awakened appetite. He began speaking to her in the language they had invented to appease her modesty eight years before in the first days of their married life. The sound of these words afflicted her as if they had been monstrous and blasphemous, they tempted her to hit him in the mouth; if she had held a knife in her hand she could have stabbed him. But Salvia seemed insensitive to this or any other feeling. Even the presence of Gina could not abash him. And what was more terrible, this access of desire worked in his face a strange rejuvenation. Beneath that bestial and degraded mask she saw the features of her lover, lips that she had

once kissed with passion, eyes into which she had once gazed with the abandonment of an infinite trust. This mockery annihilated her. There was no more strength in her body; her soul was empty of everything but a futile and overpowering hate.

It was over. In Salvia's eyes there was a dazed and puzzled look as if he had never been really awake. Stupidly laughing, still muttering long-forgotten words that seemed to come mechanically to his lips, he left her and flung himself once more upon the creaking charpoy. Helen Salvia still lay petrified, numbed with defilement, against the wall of the banda. In its uttermost corner the child cowered, small, lonely, forgotten. For a long time they remained thus divided, until, of a sudden, she realized that Salvia had fallen into a new and deeper sleep. Slowly she pulled her wits together. The effort was inconceivable. Cautiously she beckoned to Gina. The frightened child responded and crept to her side. Once more she approached the doorway with one eye still on Salvia. He smiled in his sleep. Evidently there was less need for caution; the way lay open; hand in hand they escaped. Under a thorn bush on the edge of the clearing the black woman also slept with her baby in her arms.

The sky clouded over as they pushed their way into the bush. There was enough power of cunning left in her mind to know that it would be safer to avoid the path by which they had approached the clearing. Beyond that she knew nothing, she only fled in silence; the child clinging to her hand. She did not know where she was going. If the direction which she had taken had led her into the heart of Africa it would have made no difference.

Of what followed she knew no more than if she had experienced it under the veil of an anæsthetic. The crashing of the tornado that had spun past them, opening a way through bush that seemed impenetrable; the deluge of bursting clouds, and that dark meeting under the palm-leaves which had thrilled the heart of Glanvil with tempestuous hopes; all these had passed with no more impression than that of a shadow over her afflicted mind. Of the harbour passage and of her embarcation she remembered nothing. It was with wonder that, in the intervals between the waves of assaulting memory, she found herself lying in her familiar cabin on board the *Vega*. She could not even realize that she was safe.

So the first night passed. With daylight, and Ah Qui knocking at the door to bring her their morning tea, it seemed as if she had been born into a new world amazing in its order and sanity. Gina still slept heavily. The child was so exhausted that she felt it would not be fair to wake her. As yet she had found it impossible to sleep herself; but all through that day the influence of familiar sounds, the methodical staccato of the ship's bell that marked the swift passage of time, the rattle of the winches working Almeida's cargo, the whistle of Macallum in the adjoining cabin, the mechanical accuracy with which the steward delivered meals that she could not taste, contrived to restore by their regularity the rhythm of her life. Twelve hours before she had felt that it was broken for ever; but at midday, when Rennels brought her a formal message of inquiry from Glanvil, she found herself answering him with her accustomed assurance that all went well. She was still too dazed to give a thought to the future,

but the present, in its soothing monotony, seemed to insist that she had exaggerated the terror of the past. Volition she had none. Even if she had been able to summon enough determination to emerge from her cabin she could not have done so, for the clothes that she had stripped from their drenched bodies the night before were still damp, and she did not feel that she had strength enough to face the eyes of any human creature.

Early in the afternoon as she lay dozing for the first time she heard the voice of Harvey at her door. It was strained and anxious; the sound of it nearly made her burst into tears, and yet her confidence in his friendliness made her anxious not to hurt him, and she compelled herself to answer.

"I'm sorry that I can't see you," she said. "It was kind of you to come."

"Kind? What do you mean?" he answered strangely. "I can tell you that all yesterday I went through hell."

She almost smiled at his young intensity, and yet it moved her. Hearing Harvey's voice she had become self-conscious again, for she knew that he idealized her and, in the memory of Salvia's brutality, she felt smirched, unclean. As yet she was not fit to speak with him. It seemed strange that he should be able to move her in this way; it pleased her, too, for she had thought herself incapable of feeling any more.

"It was kind of you," she repeated helplessly.

"Is there any chance of seeing you later?" Harvey's voice persisted.

Instinctively she would have answered "No," but on her lips the word transformed itself into "To-morrow,"

for his humble assiduity flattered her; he was so simple that she feared to wound him. "Just at present," she added quickly, "I don't know where I am. I couldn't talk about anything. It's kinder to leave me alone. Wait till I come on deck, to-morrow. Now I should do nothing but cry."

Her voice broke on the last word. If she had been working for effect she could not have mastered it more neatly. And evidently Harvey understood, for he went quietly away.

She hoped that she had not been hard on him. It softened her, dangerously, to observe the delicacy with which this ship's company of average men respected her solitude; it filled her with a gratitude that was almost emotional, with a pride that nearly turned her light head. That night she was able to close her eyes without fear.

Like the continuation of a dream came the next day. Even now she could not bring herself to go on deck, for the fears that she had conquered were phantom, echoes of what had passed, and the menace of Salvia's return remained unabated. The little peace which she had achieved was so precarious that the very sight of Panda might destroy it. But Gina, with the resilience of childhood and that strange disquieting hardness of her own, was ready for anything. Helen Salvia dressed the child in her dry but crumpled clothes and lay on the locker, listening, while Gina flirted with Harvey on the deck outside her window. She listened and wondered, for it seemed to her unnatural that so delicate a creature as Gina should have been able to recover so quickly. It disquieted her to feel that Gina was so unlike herself, that

there was something old and hard and inhuman in her that was alien to her own nature; and yet she was glad of it too, for it would have been terrible if the horrors which they had endured had left an indelible mark on such a young and plastic life.

It pleased her also to hear Harvey's voice with its familiar and consoling inflexions. It seemed right and natural that he should be near her, and her heart was still touched by the delicacy of his silence on the night before. She found herself musing on all the attentions he had shown her since their first day of friendship at Port Said. She wondered if she had been imprudent, if, by her kindness she had encouraged him to fall in love with her. That, indeed, would be a tragedy; she was so much older than him. Older in spirit, not in years. Aged with bitterness and experience, tarnished, unclean.

She began to think how different her life might have been if Salvia had never entered it, if, instead of her Neapolitan nightmare and this wild African adventure, she had held to the course marked out for her in childhood and never left Torquay. How placid, how easy such a life would have been! Love, without doubt, must have entered it, but in what quiet guise! The husband that she found would have been some man of her own country, some Harvey or some Glanvil. . . .

It was curious, she reflected, how these two were united and, in a manner, isolated by the common origin which she shared with them. They were so different, and yet so typical. She tried to analyse her feelings towards them. With Harvey this was easy enough. She and Harvey were pals. Never, until these last moments when the

thought of a romantic relation between them had begun to trouble her, had she felt a shade of uneasiness in his company. From the first she had admired his handsomeness and his strength, the frankness of his blue eyes which she could meet without quailing, a certain air of youth that made her eager to receive his confidences and to protect them. She was always happy to be with him, and so, for that matter, was Gina; a fact which encouraged her, for she had a superstitious confidence in the rightness of the child's instinct. Life with a man of Harvey's stamp would have been a problem marvellously simplified—almost too simple, perhaps, yet Heaven knew she had known enough of complication!

Her whole relation with Glanvil had been different. Different and difficult. Even during their first encounter in Marx's office she had been conscious of a strangeness. She could not look into his eyes without effort as she had gazed in Harvey's. His confidences, if ever he had given them to her, would have been a trust to be received with awe rather than with a maternal solicitude. Of course he was older than herself; but that did not explain the difference. Perhaps it was because of his command; perhaps because she stood to him definitely in the position of a debtor, a fact that she never allowed herself to forget.

The explanation did not satisfy her. She wanted to dissociate her attitude from her obligations; she wanted to assess him as a man. The task baffled her. Between them, which ever way she turned it, rose up a curious antagonism. She was confident that it did not spring from her; she was ready to confess that in nearly every quality by which Harvey compelled her admiration, in strength,

in straightness, in generosity, Glanvil was Harvey's superior; the fact that, even in moments of intenser intimacy that had thrilled her more deeply than any which she had known with Harvey, Glanvil had seemed a stranger to her argued on his side an instinct of distrust, she had almost said of dislike. "We resemble each other too closely," she told herself. "That, probably, is the explanation."

And then it came to her that in this appraisement of the two men to whom she owed so much she had allowed herself to drift into speculations in which, as the wife of Salvia, she had no right to indulge. Love had come once into her life, and broken her, and left her. Its hour had passed; its opportunity would never come again. Reproaching herself she began to seek excuses for this unconscious lapse. They were easy to find. Even in her small experience she could remember cases of women who had passed, untaught, from one disastrous love-affair to another. Loneliness. She remembered her own empty years in Naples. And she had had Gina. . . . "That is how we are made," she told herself. "Love is not a thing that can consume itself. A woman of my kind cannot be happy unless she is giving."

At this moment she became aware of a change in her surroundings. It was the time at which Almeida's stevedores had stopped work. The sudden silence disquieted her. She wondered what had happened. It continued; not a winch moved. This could only mean one thing: that the loading was finished and that before long the *Vega* would leave Panda. Realizing this she was moved to a madness of new hope. The thought of escape in-

toxicated her. She would have run out on deck to inquire if it were true if she had been dressed or if her rain-crumpled clothes had been fit to wear. She would have called to Gina, but the child's voice could no longer be heard, so she settled down in a state of agonized expectation, waiting for news. It came, an hour later, when Ah Qui, accompanied by Gina, flushed and tired, brought in the dinner. She asked him if the ship was sailing, but the Chinaman only shook his head. He could tell her nothing but that the work on the cargo had stopped suddenly and that the captain had hurried ashore.

And now the silence of the ship seemed to her deadly and sinister. Strangely perturbed she put the tired child to bed and sat on, waiting, with open eyes, lost to all sense of time.

3

She heard a knock on the bulkhead beside her door and jumped to her feet. It was Glanvil. Before he spoke her name she knew that it was he, and hurriedly bade him enter. He came into the cabin, filling its narrow compass. It seemed to her that she had never seen him so near; she had never been so conscious before of his physical immanence; he towered above her; the top-light of the cabin, illuminating his face from a new angle, showed it to her haggard, furrowed, and so old that she was sorry for him. It was the face of a man who had just emerged from an ordeal; she could see that he had suffered, and her conscience told her that it was on her behalf, so that she grew humble and anxious to please.

He had entered boldly, but as soon as they stood face to face his awkwardness returned; it radiated from him like a current that defied approach, it penetrated her body and robbed her of the power to think or speak. After a moment of silence she gathered sufficient strength to beg him to sit down on the end of the locker where Gina still slept. "We shall not wake her," she whispered, "if we talk quietly."

He obeyed her, and she waited while he sat there with clasped hands and heavy brow struggling with words that in the moment of his double triumph over Salvia and Cardozo had seemed easy but now refused to take shape. At last he spoke.

"First of all," he said, "I want to know how you are. Since I left you a number of complications have arisen. I've had my work cut out to deal with them. In any case, I thought you would be happier left to yourself, as you suggested."

"As I suggested?" she repeated, in bewilderment.

He only answered her with a strange smile. She could not understand what he was driving at.

"I don't understand you," she said, but he would not help her to do so.

"That is a small matter," he replied. "We'll speak no more about it. I'm thankful to see that you're . . . no worse than might be expected. If you can bear to listen to me I think I ought to tell you, roughly, what has happened. There's no need for you to be frightened," he added quickly, for he saw her steady herself to meet some new blow; "things have turned out better, on the whole, than might have been expected. I'm glad that you have

not had to deal with them. Now that it's all over there's really nothing to disturb you."

He stopped dead, waiting for some sign of encouragement that she was too bewildered to give him. He cursed himself for a fool. This was the moment to which his imagination had looked forward with conscious triumph, the proud moment in which he had a right to assert himself as the instrument of her salvation and claim the reward, at least of an unusual gratitude. And now that it had come he found himself tongue-tied, humble, ashamed of what he had done. If he had not loved her he could have spoken naturally. Now he must choose his words, calculating their effect. Any words would be better than the suspense of this silence. Even if he seemed brutal, it must be broken.

"To put it shortly," he began, "your husband gave us trouble." He watched her narrowly for signs of the distress that he feared he must inflict on her. Her face was like marble. Not knowing that her soul had been battered out of all sensitiveness, he thanked Heaven for her courage. Never till that moment had he so adored her. If only to rejoice in the fineness of her steel, he continued deliberately: "Your husband took out a summons against me, a civil process, which had the effect of keeping the ship in Panda until it was settled. It implied that I had enticed you away from him. It suggested . . . well, you can imagine what it suggested."

"Yes, I can imagine," she said quietly. Then, suddenly, her stony face flushed and she clasped her hands. She spoke rapidly: "You need not tell me any more. I'm only thankful that you've been honest with me. I might

have known that you would be. Words are no good; I can't tell you the very least of what I feel—I mean your chivalry, your kindness, your gentleness, generosity. . . ." She put out her hand impulsively. "Will you take all that as said? You know that I can't thank you or repay you in any way. . . ."

He had taken her cold hand in his. Incongruous tears came into his eyes. "There's no question of that, no question," he said. "I don't ask for thanks or repayment."

"That is the worst of it," she answered quickly. "But the score isn't finished yet. There's one last thing that I want you to do for me. I want you to promise me, before I ask it, that you'll do it. It isn't a big thing. It's quite easy. Promise me . . . promise!" She clasped his hand more urgently.

"First let me finish telling you what happened."

"No, no; I don't want to hear any more. Besides, even if you won't promise, I can find some other way. The last thing—you can't refuse me." Her voice was like that of a pleading child, and when he tried to speak again she overran him, insisting on being heard. "I can be ready in five minutes," she said, "and all I want is a boat to take me ashore."

"No, no; you don't understand," he said. "I've told you already that it's all over. If only you'll listen to me. . . ."

It seemed as if she couldn't take it in, as if his words had passed through her brain without meaning, leaving her only the echo of the last.

"I won't listen to you," she persisted. "You've done

too much for me already. I refuse to be beholden to you any more. Please let me go!"

"I tell you that it's all over. You've nothing to fear. The action is withdrawn."

"Withdrawn?" she murmured. "What do you mean?"

Deliberately he handed her the document which Salvia had signed in Mourao's office. She stared at it as though it were something irrelevant, then, suddenly waking, began to read. He watched her with a clamorous excitement in his heart. His heart cried: "Look, it is I who have saved you; I have done it because I love you. It is nothing; if you were to ask me for my life you could have taken it!" But his lips were dumb; his face was white and cold and damp.

She read the paper through to the end. Then the hand that held it dropped to her side and she stood staring at nothing. At last she spoke slowly, clearly, coldly.

"I see," she said. "Yes, I see. A financial transaction. Two hundred pounds. You have bought me like an animal at the market. I'm your property. Is that it?" She laughed in a harsh voice that he did not recognize. "Do you really think I'm worth that? Two hundred pounds? What do you propose to do with me?"

He rose to his feet, blanched, shaken by her wicked injustice.

"For God's sake don't talk like that!" he whispered. "You are your own mistress, and you know it. You have no right to misunderstand me so wilfully."

She stared at him with queer, unseeing eyes. Her eyes frightened him; they were not sane. Somehow or other he must bring her to herself.

"Can't you realize?" he stammered. "This means that you are free."

She answered him with a look of wild comprehension.

"Free? Yes, is that what you say? In that case I am at liberty to go ashore?"

Now their eyes met fully. His blazed with a sudden anger that melted away into compassion as he spoke, but even this change could not conceal his bitterness.

"Yes, you're at liberty to go ashore. You're at liberty to commit any madness that comes into your head. Go, by all means! You can go ashore in five minutes, if you like. But understand this: you won't go alone. You're not fit to go alone. If you go ashore I shall go with you. Not from any right that this miserable document gives me, but because . . ." The words "I love you" struggled on his tongue; but they were never spoken. Suddenly, with a cry that seemed to come not from any human voice, she had thrown herself at his feet in an abasement that made him dumb; clutching his hand as though the stability of her reason depended on it. Her words came to him torn and mutilated by the violence of their emotion.

"Forgive me," she cried. "Forgive . . . for God's sake, forgive me. Of course, I am mad. Mad and wicked. But you know . . . you know. It's been too much for me. And I'm not fit to touch you. Not fit to touch your hand. You're too good to me, too generous, too splendid. I couldn't believe it. I'm not fit to live, but there's enough left in me to realize that. And if only you can forgive me. . . ."

She stopped abruptly, then spoke again in a voice that had become more devastating in its broken humanity.

"You see, I have faith in nothing . . . in nothing. . . ."

The word faded away as though, in the last syllable, it had no longer any connexion with the mind that had shaped it. She was alert, listening. By some perception finer than Glanvil's she had realized that the sound of her outburst had awakened the child. With a quick, tigerish movement, she had turned and left him. He saw her, as in a miraculous transformation. crouched at the other end of the locker with Gina, crying and frightened, in her arms. The life had come back into her face; it was flushed as the face of the child to which it was pressed. Their tears mingled as her voice grew soft in endearments. "Gina, my lovely, my precious, my own sweet darling! Were you frightened? No, there was nothing to be afraid of. It's mother, my sweet one, it's only mother."

Glanvil, watching them together, knew that this was a world into which he could not enter. Silently, with a bursting heart, he turned and left the mother and child together. In spite of his failure to express himself, the encounter had filled him with a curious elation. As he walked to and fro upon the lonely bridge the world seemed scarcely wide enough to contain it. His spirit expanded among the stars.

4

Evidently the *Vega's* luck had turned. Cardozo, to Glanvil's cynical surprise, was as good as his word. At dawn the dhows returned with consignments of cargo suspiciously resembling the remnants of Almeida's. Cardozo himself appeared with sheaves of doubtful docu-

ments, hurriedly prepared. He spent the morning closeted with Hendry, explaining marks and quantities with which he was evidently unfamiliar. The whole business smelt of improvization, its slovenliness drove the chief officer to distraction. Glanvil grimly reflected it was not his business to discriminate between the various and infamous degrees of Panda's business morality. His only responsibility was to his owners, and they, at least, should be satisfied with the turn that things had taken.

All through the day the elation with which he had left Helen Salvia on the night before sustained him. Why, he could not say. And yet this was certain: that where before he had laboured beneath a crushing weight of apprehensiveness and uncertainty, he now felt sure of himself and had no fear of anything that might happen. He felt that he had the whip hand of Panda and all its villainies; once more he was master of himself and of his ship.

It was with all his old confidence that he listened at lunch to Hendry's grievances. So far Hendry had had a soft time in Panda; it would do him all the good in the world to swallow a little of the medicine that his captain had taken. Cheadle, also, could do with a dose. He administered it, mildly, in a demand for information as to the state of the bunkers and an order that everything must be ready for sailing at short notice. "A new bout of coal-fever," Cheadle groaned, as he pulled on his boiler suit to measure the bunkers.

Another circumstance angered Glanvil while it cheered him. Early in the afternoon a messenger arrived with a cable from Liverpool in answer to the one that he had

dispatched on the morning he reached Panda, instructing him to proceed to Durban for mealies if any cargo space remained after his shipments at Panda. As he decoded it he realized that it had freed his hands. If Cardozo had been as smart as he wished to be he would have suppressed it. Certainly he had done his best, for when Glanvil came to examine the acknowledged date of arrival he saw that it had been lying in the Panda post office for two days. Evidently the code had baffled Cardozo; but that was no reason why the villain should not be told of the discovery. He sent for him. Immediately Cardozo appeared in a frenzy of friendliness.

"I think you had better wake up your postal authorities," Glanvil told him. "I see that this cable has been delayed."

"I am not the post office," Cardozo assured him; "but I will certainly investigate. You forget, however," he added gently, "that the wires were swept away by the storm."

"That, we decided, was an inexactitude. In any case, they have been silly enough to write their own condemnation. You can see the date for yourself." He handed the cable form to Cardozo.

"But this," said the governor, in an aggrieved voice, "is in code. I find that interesting. Such things have always fascinated me, as an amateur. If you will be kind enough to explain?"

Glanvil laughed to himself. The rogue was not subtle. For a moment he hesitated. It might stimulate Cardozo to greater effort to know that the *Vega* was now independent of his cargo. A concealed weapon, on the other hand,

might be more useful in an emergency. Glanvil stifled his instinctive frankness and took back the cablegram without a word.

"The cargo goes well?" he asked.

"Well enough." His organization, Cardozo confessed, was in some ways inferior to Almeida's. "But by the end of the day we shall see."

That evening a chastened and exhausted Hendry presented his report. The work had been as slipshod as Almeida's had been precise. "They're enough to turn a man grey, sir," Hendry confided. "It's beyond me, and that's a fact. As far as I can see, he's got the same gang working as Almeida—there's no mistake about that, I know most of the beggars' faces—but I'm damned if I know what's come over them. There's no kick left in them; they've lost all their guts and backbone. Two days ago they were getting along as quiet as clockwork. Now the swine can't do a thing without cackling about it. I reckon they've lost a good seventy per cent. of efficiency in forty-eight hours. If they go on at this rate we shall spend next Christmas here. I'd be glad, sir, if you could ginger up this Cardozo a bit."

"I'll see him to-morrow morning," said Glanvil. "As a matter of fact, we have no need to put up with any nonsense. I heard this morning from Liverpool the South African mealie crop is coming along, and they're clearing out reserves. We have orders for Durban. Please don't mention this to anyone. I want to keep it up my sleeve."

"That's the best bit of news I've heard for two months, sir," Hendry replied. "After this and Naples, I've had enough of Dago ports to last me a lifetime."

Then Cheadle came in gloomily, his cap on the back of his head.

"Here's that chit about the bunkers, sir," he said in an aggrieved voice. "As I anticipated, we're well in hand."

"Very good, chief. You understand that I may want steam at short notice?"

"I do, sir," Cheadle answered grudgingly. "Of course, that isn't what the office 'ld call economy, but if you give the order . . ."

"Exactly, Mr. Cheadle. The order has been given."

Cheadle lingered in the doorway.

"I have been thinking a good bit," he said, "about this unfortunate Mrs. Salvia. The poor creature must have been considerably upset. The little girl seems to have recovered completely. She is running all over the ship. Merry as a grig, as they say. I have not had an opportunity of speaking with her mother since she came on board again; but I think you'll be interested to know, sir, that Mrs. Cheadle—my wife, that is—is deeply interested in the subject of"—he coughed discreetly—"of *rescue work*. I have no doubt but that when we get back to Liverpool Mrs. Cheadle will be able to find her a place in some Christian home, and dispose of the little girl in an institution."

Glanvil's temper roughened. He controlled himself with difficulty, but some of his annoyance found a way into his reply.

"That is very kind of you, Mr. Cheadle. As a matter of course I shall interest myself in Mrs. Salvia's future."

"In that case I will say no more, sir," Cheadle answered, with dignity. The tone of his renunciation im-

plied a certainty of the worst. "As far as I can see," he added significantly, "the young woman will have no lack of friends. Macallum tells me that both the chief officer and the third are contemplating plans of . . . hospitality. Mr. Hendry, of course, is a married man. I have nothing to say against him; though what Mrs. Hendry may think about it is another matter. Under the circumstances, I doubt if I could persuade Mrs. Cheadle to handle the case."

"For the present," Glanvil answered with asperity, "the case does not need handling. If I wish for Mrs. Cheadle's help I'll ask you later."

"Very well, sir, very well."

And Cheadle gloomily departed.

It was not until noon on the following day, a white, devitalized noon beneath which men's bodies wilted like lank leaves, that Cardozo's muddled energy reached its final confusion. Hendry, or rather his pulped remnant, appeared half-way through lunch, demanding Glanvil's immediate attention. Glanvil calmed him with difficulty, and when the meal was over they went together to the adjoining cabin.

"I can't go on like this, sir," Hendry protested. "The conditions are impossible. To deal with this fellow's papers I should need a staff of clerks. You'd think he'd never set eyes on a manifest in his life. And that's not all. The stuff's coming aboard not properly marked, in sacks full of holes. It'll cost more to clean the ship than the damned cargo's worth. I could put up with that, even, if the supply were regular. But it isn't. This fellow Cardozo keeps on sending out his dhows with a few hundred-

weight in the bottom of them. It's my belief, sir, that he's trying to fool us. He hasn't got the stuff, and that's the truth, and all this 'ca'canny' among the stevedores is just a blind to keep us fiddling here until it comes down country. He's wasting our time, and if we have cargo waiting for us at Durban that can be loaded in a business-like way, I reckon it'll pay us to finish with him and clear."

Glanvil took his outburst quietly. Hendry's ideas accorded with his own growing suspicions, but the terms that he had made with Cardozo were too good to be sacrificed unreasonably. He sent for Cardozo.

"Unless you speed things up," he told him, "I shall clear this evening."

Cardozo grew eloquent with apologies. "One cannot expect things to go so rapidly with such terrific heat. You do not know Panda as well as I do. This evening, with luck, it will rain. After that it will be cooler."

"The chief officer tells me that your papers are in an ungodly mess. He doesn't believe that you have the stuff ashore."

Cardozo was indignant at such a monstrous suspicion. "Now that you drive me to it," he said, "I must confess that ashore we have been handicapped by a labourers' strike. That is the explanation."

"I don't want explanations," Glanvil told him. "I want cargo. I give you till this evening to get things going again. If you don't do that, strike or no strike, I shall sail."

"On my word of honour," Cardozo assured him. He

did not seem troubled to find that Glanvil was not impressed.

And indeed, during the afternoon the supplies of copra that reached the *Vega's* side became more regular, as even the distracted Hendry was forced to admit. Glanvil was pleased to think that his ultimatum had produced so good an effect. It seemed possible that Cardozo, for once, had spoken the truth, and that all the delay had been due to his embarrassments ashore. Evening abated nothing of the day's oppression. Perhaps Cardozo was right again. If it rained in the night everyone would be able to breathe and think more clearly. He decided to give Cardozo the benefit of the doubt.

After dinner he retired to his cabin. In the stress of the last week he had neglected everything. Apart from the answered cable he had made no attempt to communicate with his owners; he had not even replied to the letters from home that had reached him on the afternoon of his departure from Naples. Now, in the renewal of strength and confidence he stripped to a singlet, and set himself to deal with the accumulated litter on his desk. The heat frustrated his will. He saw, in a moment, that the task must be abandoned. He sat on at his desk, too lazy to move, staring at the "African Pilot" which still lay open at the page defining the dangers of the approach to Panda and the deadly *Caballos Marinhos* shoal.

"Caballos Marinhos," he thought. "That must mean Sea Horses. My Portuguese is improving." And then he began to think of the fantastic names that had been given to other dangerous reefs, and particularly of one

that flung its spray into the air westward of Berry Head. The Dancing Beggars that was called. The Dancing Beggars. Between them and the Sea Horses of Panda the contour of the globe bulged boldly into space. Against the dark magnitude of that monstrous curve his imagination set the infinitesimal *Vega* with himself and his crew crawling like microbes aboard her. How small they seemed, how insignificant all the passions that possessed them, their puny schemes, their appetites, their hopes . . . Helen Salvia . . .

A knock startled him. Before he could answer it she was at his side, wild-eyed and potent as a tornado.

"Gina!" she cried. "She's missing. We can't find her. What can I do?"

Her urgency flustered him. It was so rapid that he could not respond to it at once.

"Try to calm yourself for a moment," he begged her, as he collected his thoughts.

"I can't. I can't. We must do something. At once."

"Probably she's in the poop with Lamps. We'll go and see. Come along!"

"No. She's not there. I've been all over the ship."

"When did you miss her?"

"I don't know. Yes, I do. Ten minutes ago. But that's not the point."

"When did you see her last?"

"I didn't see her. Mr. Cochran says she was playing with the goose. That was an hour ago. I've called her everywhere. She's gone. For God's sake do something!"

He tried to soothe her.

"You mustn't break down like this. That won't mend

matters. Probably she's playing a trick on you—she's hiding somewhere."

"Gina never does that. She's gone. They've taken her away. Laurence. I knew we hadn't finished with him."

"That's nonsense. You can put that out of your head. Salvia is squared. It'll take him a few days to drink ten pounds."

"No. You don't know him. If you had only seen him. He was mad about Gina—just as if he could eat her. Besides, it's no good arguing, I know. I know. And that paper. I've just remembered. It spoke only of me; it said nothing about her. That's Laurence all over. You're simple compared with him. I'm sure he had it in his mind when he signed it. But don't let us talk like this. If he's taken Gina ashore, I must go ashore too. I can't stay here a moment without her. Please order Mr. Hendry to give me a boat. Oh, my God, can't you understand?"

Glanvil understood. What was more he believed in the rightness of her instinct. Salvia had tricked him; or, rather, he himself had been fool enough to give Salvia his chance. He knew that she meant what she said, that she was prepared to face once more the horrors that had almost destroyed her for the sake of the child. He took her firmly by the arm, and compelled her to sit down on the locker.

"I want you to promise me one thing," he said. "And that is that you'll stay here quietly and do nothing without my permission. Probably you're right. Even if you are it doesn't make much difference. You must trust me to

deal with this. If Salvia has taken her, I promise you that I will get her back again. Only you must stay here quietly. Otherwise I can do nothing. Will you promise me that, now? Will you trust me?"

"Yes, I'll trust you," she said, with a strange quietness. "You know that I trust you."

"Then show that you trust me by putting your feet up and staying here quietly. Promise me, absolutely, that you will not try to do anything on your own."

"I promise. How good you are to me!"

As Glanvil pulled on his coat he heard her sobbing quietly behind him. He could not trust himself to look at her again before he left the cabin.

Emerging on deck he ran straight in to Harvey.

"No luck, Harvey?" he asked, taking his errand for granted.

"No luck, sir. The bo's'n and I have been all over the ship. Macallum has searched his side, too, but I don't think there's any likelihood of her having gone down to the engines; they're the one thing she's frightened of. The kid has her own little ways and sticks to them, and I know pretty well where to look for her. She's not on board, sir, and I don't believe she's fallen overboard either; she's like a monkey when it comes to climbing. I think Mrs. Salvia's right, sir. It's her husband."

"The second saw her last?"

"Yes, sir." The voice was Cochran's. "I saw her for'ard, on the well-deck, playing with that old goose. Number One swears she was there an hour ago, so does the rice-cook."

"An hour ago. It was light then. Were any of the stevedores still aboard?"

"Must have been. There are always a few stragglers fooling with the Chinks. Then there's the old Arab that sells fruit. He must have been there."

"Hendry's sure to know that. Where the devil is he?"

"Here, sir," Hendry breathed in his ear. "When we went in to dinner the deck was empty. I wouldn't have had this happen for worlds. Poor thing! The mother, I mean. She's gone, right enough, and heaven only knows where she's got to."

The four men stood in silence. Common anxiety had obliterated for a moment all their differences of rank and temperament. At last Glanvil spoke.

"Are there any shore-boats alongside, Hendry?"

Hendry hurried to the berthing rails.

"Two, sir," he reported. "The dinghy that used to be Almeida's and another."

"Then turn the niggers out of both of them. Quietly. As little noise as possible and no nonsense. Let the bo's'n and the quartermasters see to it. Fetch them on board, and stow them aft in the sick bay for the time being."

"Very good, sir."

"You, Harvey, tell the chief that I want him immediately. Cochran, stand by a minute. I shall want you."

Without effort a plan of action had defined itself in Glanvil's mind. He was impatient to begin. He could have lost his temper when he saw the figure of Cheadle slowly lurching along the deck in his direction, under Harvey's escort.

"Mr. Cheadle, kindly get up steam immediately. We shall clear in two hours' time."

"In two hours, sir?" Cheadle gasped. "That's hardly possible."

"It must be done. I don't care how you do it. Turn out both watches. I won't take any excuses. I gave you the order this morning to be prepared."

"If you'll be so good as to explain, sir," Cheadle began.

"No time for explanations. Two hours. If you can prevent it being noticed on shore, so much the better."

From the gangway beneath them, where the bo's'n and his men were performing Hendry's orders, came the stifled sound of a struggle. Cochran gave a chuckle of satisfaction. The resentment in Cheadle's eyes gave place to sudden alarm. Two quartermasters struggled up the gangway with a native bound and gagged between them.

"I don't like this, sir," Cheadle whined. "As chief engineer of this ship——"

"That's enough, Mr. Cheadle. . . . If you dispute my orders, I shan't hesitate to arrest you. You'd better go at once."

Cheadle went.

"Now, Harvey," Glanvil went on quickly, "I'm going on shore to look for this child. I think I know where to find her. I want you and Cochran to go with me. It'll be a tough job, and if either of you dislike it I'll ask for other volunteers; but I know there's no need for that. If you have revolvers you'd better take them. I've lost my own."

"I'm in it, sir, like a shot," said Harvey, and Cochran grinned an eager assent.

"Two minutes, then."

They left him. The prospect of immediate action was stimulating to Glanvil. It was as though the strings of his existence had been tautened, attuned, to a higher key. Now they vibrated with the true and splendid clearness of an instrument perfected for the expression of his will. For a moment his thoughts fled backward to the figure, shattered and pathetic, which he had left huddled on the locker in his cabin; but he knew that in this moment such reflections were dangerous to an enterprise whose success depended upon a ruthless concentration. Only for one second did he allow himself to halt outside the porthole in the for'ard bulkhead and listen. From the lighted cabin issued no sound, and he was thankful for this. Two figures approached him quietly.

"Ready, sir," Harvey whispered.

5

Glanvil took his place at the tiller In front of him Cochran's brawny torso obscured his vision of Harvey. Slowly and faultlessly they pulled upstream. Almeida's boat was light, easy to handle and of shallow draught. For this reason he had chosen it. Gradually the lights of the *Vega* fell astern. A darkness dense and tepid as that which lies buried in the deep levels of a mine received them; it muffled the plashing of their oars; it met their faces like the stale breath of a sleeping monster; it was the breath of Africa asleep. Now it obscured the lights of the *Vega* altogether; the trailing serpent of Panda coiled behind a mass of alluvial land that bulged into the river's

estuary on their port quarter and was lost. No word was spoken. The low sky blackened so completely that Glanvil might have been alone.

Still trusting to his own sense of direction and that which the languid current gave him, he steered steadily upstream. At the moment when he heard of Gina's disappearance the plan that he now followed had come into his mind. It had the authenticity of an inspiration; so he did not question it.

Luckily, or unluckily, Helen Salvia had told him no details of her disastrous adventure on shore, and for this reason he was unable to judge how far Salvia's reawakened passion for the child was responsible for this unexpected emergency. The craftiness with which any reference to Gina had been omitted at the time when the document of surrender was signed, argued that Glanvil's carelessness might have set some such scheme smouldering in Salvia's mind. Of this, at least, he was certain: Salvia's legal proceedings had been inspired by Cardozo's anxiety to keep the *Vega* in Panda, and it seemed more than likely that in planning this new outrage Cardozo had played on Salvia's passions with the idea of countering the ultimatum that Glanvil had given him during the afternoon.

How the kidnapping had been managed he could not guess. Probably the lounging stevedores, paid by Cardozo, or the infamous seller of mangoes, had contrived it at the moment when the ship's company assembled for dinner, leaving the for'ard deck in the possession of the Chinese. There was no doubt in his mind as to Gina's destination. By this time, he felt certain, she had been carried to Salvia's hut in the swamp. Without doubt,

also, Cardozo was prepared to protest and ready to frustrate with the forces of the law any attempt to rescue her by way of Panda. For this reason Glanvil had resolved to approach Salvia's hut from an unexpected quarter, working up the branches of the river that lay nearest to the mainland until he should reach the level of the swamp, then cutting inland rapidly and taking Salvia's back door by surprise. No doubt Salvia would be prepared for resistance; but they were three to one—or, perhaps, to less than one, for Salvia was sure to be disorganized by the debauch which he had enjoyed at Glanvil's expense, and, in any case, would be more ready to bargain than to fight. This time, Glanvil determined, there should be no question of bargaining. It was better so. In his present frame of mind the methods by which he had purchased his last triumph seemed a little ignoble.

Romantic as the venture might be, it was only when he found himself launched into darkness that he realized its difficulty. Within half an hour of leaving the ship they had reached the fringes of the delta. This mass of accumulating silt which, as a distant prospect, had enchanted by its bright unnatural greenness, now revealed itself as a dark maze of islands amid which the river swirled or slept through innumerable branches, some roofed with tangles of vegetation no blacker than the night, some spending themselves in pools, clogged with papyrus, too shallow even for the draught of Almeida's dinghy, and all separated from their shores by a matted growth of mangrove. Even by day an exploration of this watery wilderness would have been full of uncertainty and awe, by night its strangeness seemed unearthly, reminding Glanvil

of nothing that he had ever experienced except in dreams.

In principle it seemed easy enough to keep on hugging the land; but no sooner had he penetrated the outer entanglements of the delta, having reached a point at least a mile below the calculated level of Salvia's hut, than he found his way complicated by innumerable creeks and backwaters, in darkness indistinguishable from the stream itself. Three times in succession he found himself involved in one of these blind water-alleys that shallowed till the boat came to a standstill in thickets of papyrus or grounded on soft mud. Thrice, with a growing sense of bewilderment and frustration, they poled their way backward, picking up a new channel that seemed, indeed, continuous, but dragged them steadily away from their objective.

Glanvil dreaded these digressions, not only because they wasted time that he could ill spare, but because, in that starless night, they muddled his sense of orientation, the fallible faculty on which all his hopes depended. It troubled him to realize the willing silence with which Cochran and Harvey answered to his changing orders. It mattered little whether it sprang from discipline or faith. He wondered if either of them guessed how little confidence he had in himself.

Slowly, painfully, baffled by many checks and turnings, they felt their way inward. He believed that by this time they must surely have penetrated deeply enough. He had told Cheadle to be ready to sail in two hours—more than two hours ago. The channel in which they now found themselves swept suddenly to port. Out of fairness to his patient companions he decided that he would

not risk another defeat; but here the water kept its depth right up to the roots of the mangroves, and landing was impossible.

Slowly they turned the corner. Before them the river widened into a lagoon from the surface of which myriads of invisible water-fowl rose with wild cries and creaking wings. Glanvil put his helm to starboard. Ten yards from shore the boat came to a standstill in soft mud.

Deep mud was a more dangerous complication than deep water. Cochran stood up amidships to take a sounding with the blade of his oar. As they lay there quietly, awaiting his report, the stern was smitten with an upheaval of water that was like a tidal wave. Glanvil caught at the gunwale of the boat which swayed to starboard as though it would capsize and, in the same moment, was sucked backward into the pit of a whirlpool. Cochran lost his footing and went overboard with a splash. His hands, clutching at the boat's side, righted her, and the sleepy monster against whose flanks they had slid inward, floundered away into deep water with thunderous snortings.

"My God! I thought it was the end of the world," gasped Cochran, shaking his wet head like a dog.

"Hippo," said Glanvil laconically.

Then they all burst out laughing, and this sudden release of tension broke the spell of their hallucinated silence.

"Fine and cool in here," Cochran spluttered. "Now that I'm wet I may as well stay in. It's all right. I can touch bottom, sir. I guess I'd better go ashore and have a look round. That brute's done us one good turn, anyway; scared the crocs out of their lives."

With a sound of sucking mud and breaking bubbles of marsh-gas he waded to land.

"Not too many mangroves," he shouted back to them. "Couldn't have found a brighter spot, if it suits you, sir."

They landed. Harvey went first, Glanvil followed, up to his thighs in mud. Between them they pulled the boat as near to the shore as was possible. They stood, all three, dripping and unreasonably triumphant, upon the narrow ledge of firm soil that skirted the vegetation of the swamp. Their condition was, in fact, that of climbers benighted upon a mountain shelf; and their adventure had hardly begun.

For, even if, by the grace of providence, Glanvil's instinct had led him within easy distance of Salvia's clearing, even if his luck still held and enabled him to stumble on that minute objective, the odds were all against his finding his way back to the point at which the boat was beached. To count upon instinct for that would be tempting the providence that had favoured them, and no man, however skilled in woodcraft, could hope to mark a trail through this homogeneous morass, where palms and thorn-thickets and gullies of stagnant water repeated themselves endlessly in a ponderable darkness. He thought it best to take his companions into his confidence.

"We've got to make a decision," he said. "According to my calculations the child is in a hut where Salvia is living on the further side of this swamp. I haven't approached it from this side; so, though I don't think I'm far out, I can't be certain of hitting it; but there's a sort of road that runs straight to it from the town, and if we strike that we're all right. What troubles me now is how

to get back to this point and pick up the boat again. As a matter of fact, I don't think it's worth trying; we might waste half the night over it and get no further; so what I propose is leaving it here and trusting to some other means of getting back to the ship. I think we'll leave it at that and get along at once."

They turned their backs on the water and started once more. Their task was as full of frustrations as a nightmare. Glanvil led them. He did not know where he was leading. After a little while he ceased even to care. It was better, he thought, to trust blindly to the will that drove him inland, fighting his way, foot by foot, against the sullen defences of green. The others advanced, breathing heavily, behind him. The struggle became so mechanical that his mind became possessed by anthropomorphic ideas like that of a savage. The invisible hosts against which he struggled were not inanimate, but creatures sentient, hostile, and even cunning. The thorns that sprang backward and tore into his flesh were moved to wound him by malice; the ropes of liana that snared his feet were spread with intent to trip him; it was with a savage sense of satisfaction that he crushed and rent their fleshy limbs; the smell of their sap was like the smell of blood; he exulted in it as he and the others crashed through the thickets, scattering death and mutilation as they went. Sometimes there was respite in open sluits of mud whose encrusted surface gave way beneath their weight and sucked them downward. In these crossings, perilous as they were, he was stimulated by a sudden relief from the obsession of malignant greenness; the air grew less suffocating, the sky cleared to an unimpeded

blackness. Then, as they scrambled to the further bank, bloodshed began again.

At the end of an hour that seemed like ten the character of the vegetation suddenly changed. Glanvil's outstretched hands, that by this time had acquired the sensitiveness of an insect's antennæ, came in contact not with thorned branches but with the erect and fleshy leaves of a plantation of wild bananas.

His heart choked with wild hopes. "We've done it," he called back gaily as he felt his way between the smooth stems.

To this plantation succeeded another of mealies that had shot upward like elephant-grass in their desire for sun. On the edge of these he halted to get his breath and gather strength for the moment that was coming. The others came up behind him. He could hear Cochran's laboured breathings above the shrilling of frogs which had been so constant that, until that moment, he had not noticed it.

"If you'll wait here a second, I'll have a look," Glanvil told them.

He stole forward, rustling the dry mealie stalks like a breeze. He found himself on the edge of a clearing; but the clearing was not Salvia's. In the middle of it, huddled together like huge cattle asleep, lay a circle of grass huts. It was a native village. Even in the midst of his disappointment there was relief. The nearness of any kind of humanity was cheering after that wilderness of hostile trees. The snarling and howling of dogs greeted his presence. He went straight up to the largest hut and called loudly. Within it he grew conscious of an attentive

silence. Then, with a startling suddenness, the skin curtain was thrust aside from the door and the naked shadow of a young man appeared preceded by the blade of a long fighting-spear.

Glanvil began to curse his lack of language and the futility of gesture.

"Salvia," he repeated again and again. "I want to find Salvia!"

The black man stared back at him without comprehension.

He heard Harvey's voice.

"Let me see if I can manage it, sir. I know a word or two of Swahili."

He began to talk, slowly, clumsily. The black man understood. He dropped his war spear and emerged into the clearing carrying another, a light-hafted weapon of the kind that is used for throwing at birds. He pointed, and they followed in single file. He laughed and spoke to Harvey in a dialect that was beyond him.

And now the way seemed easy, its surface trampled smooth by naked feet. It twisted cunningly through the shadows of a drier bush; it went like a snake, along the way of least resistance but with an unchanging purpose. The native walked so quickly that their limbs could not keep pace with his. Time after time he halted and stood, like a statue of ebony, waiting for them. It seemed to Glanvil as if they were turning back upon the bush through which they had blundered with such labour. Evidently, in his blindness, he had overshot his mark by several miles. It began to seem as if they would go on like this for ever when the native suddenly stopped, and as

Glanvil came up with him he saw that they had come at last to the round clearing that he knew so well. In his mud-sodden pocket he found a handful of rupees which he thrust into the native's fingers. The man raised his hand to his forehead in a solemn salute and left them. Harvey and Cochran came up behind him.

"This is the place," he told them.

The solitary banda slept as soundly as the native village. By a merciful providence no dog was aroused by their presence, and yet the very silence of the place made it more menacing.

"I'll go by myself first," Glanvil whispered. "You two fellows follow me as quietly as you can and have your revolvers ready."

"If there's any scrapping to be done," Cochran grunted, "I'm in it."

"Do nothing unless you're forced to," Glanvil advised. "It may not be necessary."

He crept forward to the opening of the hut. He peered into its darkness. His eyes, by this time endowed with the sense of a nocturnal animal, distinguished the form of Salvia stretched on his side upon the thonged charpoy. On the ground beside it the black woman slept face downward, her child bundled against her breast. Salvia choked and started in his sleep. It was almost as if some watchful intelligence warned him of Glanvil's presence. Then he lurched over on to his back and began to snore.

Glanvil drew his breath. In all that darkness there was no sign of Gina. A medley of new projects whirled into his mind. If the child were not there all his efforts

had been wasted. But Salvia, for certain, could tell him where she was. He decided to call the others; to wake up Salvia at the point of the revolver and force him to show them where she was secreted. That should be easy enough, for the firearms would frighten the black woman out of attempting to give the alarm. Any violence would pass unnoticed in that solitude.

He began to retrace his steps cautiously, and, as he did so, was almost startled into a cry. Something soft and cold had touched his hand—a cowed and friendly dog, a night-adder writhing in the grass wall. . . .

He snatched his hand away, and then, in an instant, realized that it was Gina who had seen his shadow in the doorway and crept to his side out of the inmost darkness of the hut. In obedience to a sudden impulse he picked the child up in his arms and kissed her.

"Don't speak," he whispered. "Not a sound! Go quickly to Mr. Harvey, who's waiting outside. There's a good girl." Quietly she slid away from him. It seemed as if this slender creature had been born with an instinct for such desperate adventure. He turned and spoke in a low voice to Harvey:

"Get away quickly, you two. Carry her along the path. It opens over in that corner. Don't wait for anything. I'll follow you."

He turned to do so. Harvey and Cochran had started already; but as he dashed off diagonally to follow them, excitement made him careless. A taut strand of wire caught his shaky legs and flung him to the ground. All the impetus of his strength was on this headlong fall; his forehead, like a flying ram, collided with the burnt

stump of a tree. For a moment he lost consciousness. In a second Cochran was at his side and bending over him; Cochran was shouting in his ear:

"Get away quickly, sir, if you can. I'll deal with him."

He could not imagine what it was all about.

"Get away!" Cochran repeated.

Glanvil had a momentary vision of Salvia standing in the doorway with a rifle in his hands. He tried to scramble to his feet. Something had gone wrong with his left knee. To move it was agony. Once before the same thing had happened. He remembered it in a flash. A football field—Brixham—fifteen years ago. Dimly understanding, he obeyed. He began to limp away across the clearing. Sick with pain, the flash of the rifle and a simultaneous report smote his dazed mind with a shattering impact. He heard the crack of Cochran's revolver and Salvia screaming unintelligible foreign words. Mad with pain and anxiety to stand by Cochran, he pulled up. Another bullet snapped like a whip-lash in the air. Cochran, his head lowered like that of a charging bull, hurtled by him and fell to the ground.

"Blast him!" he cried. "Can't you move, sir? For God's sake take cover, then. Get out of range while I keep him quiet with the Mauser."

He heard the words, but could not take them in. When he raised his head to answer, the darkness span away from him. A red-hot needle pierced his knee. Rough on Cochran, he thought. Another shot from Salvia spattered them with earth. Cochran's pistol replied. He laughed as he fired.

"Like old times, sir. I remember being potted by a

submarine off Ushant when I was in the Q boats. I can't see the blighter," he went on hoarsely, "but I guess he can't see us either. Aim at the flash—that's the ticket. If you're damaged, sir, you'd best get into the wood while I keep him busy."

"It's my knee," Glanvil muttered. "Gives me hell to move."

"Slipped cartilage, ten to one," said Cochran. "Lie down flat and let me give the foot a pull. How's that?"

It was better. It seemed as though by this simple procedure some of the agonizing tension had been relieved. He pulled himself again into a kneeling posture.

"Now don't go waiting for me, sir. No rot of that kind," Cochran continued. "You get right off and I'll fetch up somehow. So long and good luck."

There were no words to be said. He was crippled, unarmed, and therefore useless. Painfully, Glanvil crawled toward the edge of the clearing. The ache in his knee abated. He pulled himself upright, clutching at the trunk of a tree. With dread of the old agony's renewal, he forced himself to flex and straighten the knee. There was no pain in it, only a numbness and a feeling of protest and apprehensiveness.

He set off slowly, limping along the well-remembered track. Behind him he heard the blind duel proceeding. Shot after shot. The answering fire of Cochran's pistol seemed like the spitting of a child's toy against the reports of Salvia's rifle. And all the time that he limped onward his dazed mind was fighting against the impulse to return and face the danger at Cochran's side. He knew that he could give no help; but that would not have restrained

him had he not realized that Harvey might easily lose the track. In any case it was his duty to wait for Cochran. He halted, bewildered, as the steady firing went on.

There came a sudden silence. The duel had ceased. How had it ended? Now, more than ever, his duty to Cochran called him. In that sinister cessation he imagined Cochran lying with a bullet through his lungs. The bush shuddered as if in horror at what had happened. It meant nothing, only that the wind was rising. He could bear it no longer. He hurried back along the path as fast as his leg would allow him. He watched himself going as from a distance. "I'm mad," he thought. "Well, well, that can't be helped." He heard steps approaching rapidly. "Salvia!" he thought, and pulled himself together for a final struggle. The approaching figure became aware of him and stopped. "Who is it?" Glanvil cried.

"Is that you, sir?" Cochran's voice answered him. "By God, I thought you were a lion. I nearly gave it you."

"Salvia?" Glanvil gasped.

"I don't know if I potted him. Hope I did. The devil stopped firing. How's the knee, sir?"

"Pretty well, thanks. It's the head that's missing. A bit giddy."

"Come on, then. Let's give you a hand."

Honestly he was glad of it. He took hold of Cochran's arm. The jacket sleeve was drenched with warm sweat.

"Steady, sir. A bit lower down. That gives me jip."

The dampness was not of sweat, but of blood.

"You're hit?" Glanvil asked quickly.

"Nothing to shout about," Cochran assured him. "I think the blighter's taken a chunk out of my shoulder."

Now the wind was really rising. Around them all the dry bush had begun to roar. As they stumbled onward, his body half propelled by Cochran's strength, its tumult seemed to get into Glanvil's brain. Something in this adventure was familiar; he couldn't remember what until, of a sudden, he became aware of the leaning baobab which he had made a landmark on the night of the other storm. In the advent of this demon of wind it seemed to him as if history were repeating itself. Then, as before, a flash of lightning illuminated everything in a white, unreal splendour. Full in its track he saw the figure of Harvey, unnaturally tall, hurrying away from them with Gina in his arms.

"There he is, sir!"

Cochran holloaed like a boy. In another moment they were together.

Now it seemed to Glanvil as if nothing mattered. The numbness with which the concussion had affected his brain gave way to a curious exultation. Though his feet felt as if they did not belong to him, his head was preternaturally clear, so full of power and cunning that he seemed to himself possessed. The same infection seized them all at the same moment. Cochran and Harvey began to chaff one another like schoolboys returning from a picnic. It seemed incredible that one of them had been stunned, that another was still bleeding from a bullet wound, and that the third, after enormous exertions, was carrying the weight of a child half-dead with fear. They

tramped on, elated with triumph. The wind, which had now risen to a gale, roared about their heads. Then came the rain, full of wild, blinding violence. Beneath its uproar no voices could be heard.

"Bear to the left here," Glanvil shouted. "We must avoid the town. Cardozo may have set a guard."

"No fear of soldiers, sir," Cochran bawled back. "The Portuguese don't like water!"

They cut across the rear of the Indian bazaar, a wilderness of carefully tilled allotments enclosed by futile strands of rusty barbed wire. There followed the outskirts of a native compound, a wilderness of middens dumped upon earth stripped bare as by the passage of a swarm of locusts. In a space of time that seemed to Glanvil short beyond all his reckonings, they had scrambled on to the road that skirted the sea. Dazed with exhaustion and thankfulness, he sat upon the coral coping, his head between his hands. He realized that he had reached the end of his tether. He did not think he could have walked another hundred yards.

"You take the kid a moment, second," Harvey was saying. "I'll borrow another boat."

Cochran held out his arms. Gina, without a murmur, lay there contentedly.

"Aha, I've got you this time, miss!" Cochran grunted. "I've got you this time!" He folded the small body in his bloodstained arms. He laughed to himself, as though he could not deal with this happiness.

The voice of Harvey reached them in a rain-swept halloa. Glanvil followed Cochran's sturdy figure over the

sodden sand. They clambered into a boat that lay awash, ankle-deep. They pushed off.

"My God, it isn't half blowing!" said Cochran.

That interminable crossing Glanvil would never forget. The estuary waters were now so lashed by wind and rain that they drove seaward like the swell of a heavy sea. Into that stormy blackness he steered, straining his eyes for the least sparkle of the *Vega's* lights, hoping against hope that the current would not carry them on to the rocks of Vumba Island or the more deadly hoofs of the Sea Horses. And, once again, he found himself under the loom of the *Vega's* hull at a moment when he least expected it. Harvey, in the boat's bows, clutched at the receding ladder and brought her alongside. Glanvil himself clambered up first and took the child from Cochran. The red face of Hendry received him at the head of the ladder. His eyes showed in the lamplight full of stupid tears.

"Good luck, good luck, sir," was all that he could say.

"What about the boat, sir?" Harvey sang out from below.

"Shove her adrift," Glanvil answered.

"Let her drift to hell!" Cochran added, in an undertone.

"All hands on deck, Hendry. We sail at dawn," said Glanvil.

Hendry could only blink his surprise. Evidently Glanvil was mad.

"Sail at dawn, sir? In this?"

"What time is it?"

"Eight bells just gone, sir."

Four o'clock. "That gives you just over an hour. Let the chief engineer know."

He passed quickly to the door of his cabin with Gina in his arms. She was there on the locker. She had obeyed him. There was no woman like her. With her white, tragic face she came to meet him. Without a sob, without a cry.

His voice broke with the ecstasy of triumph.

"Here she is," he said. "Take her!"

He turned away. The sight of this meeting was too heavy to be borne, but though he could not see, its violence penetrated him so that his eyes were blinded by tears. He heard her voice subdued to accents of an unknown tenderness. He would have left them together, but for the moment did not know where to go. Controlling an intolerable emotion, he stalked out into the alleyway and stood there waiting. Time no longer existed. Emerging from a dream he heard her voice whisper his name. Almost fearing to face her, he re-entered the cabin. She had left the child on the locker, wrapped in one of his blankets. She stood meekly before him with a dreadful happiness in her eyes.

"Captain Glanvil, I must speak to you . . . and I can't."

He smiled. It was impossible to meet her eyes in silence, and yet he, too, could not speak.

"It's too much," she said. "How can I ever thank you? What can I give you in return?"

He laughed aloud. He heard the echo of his laughter and did not know his own voice.

"Yourself," he answered.

"Myself?" She closed her eyes and sighed. "Oh, willingly," she said.

And so the mad world came to an end. In the mirror beyond her head he saw the reflection of a maniac in rain-sodden, blood-stained clothes; he saw a wild face, slashed by thorns, a gaunt throat, burning eyes, and, in its arms, the figure of a woman. He could not believe that this phantom was himself.

6

Hendry came to the door and knocked.

"Two bells, sir."

"Very good; I'm coming."

When Glanvil came out on to the windy deck Hendry was still waiting for him.

"I don't like the look of it, sir," he said, "and that's the honest truth."

"Don't like the look of what, Hendry?"

"This wind, sir. There's no sense in it. Five minutes ago it was on the port bow. Now it's astern. And the glass is behaving like a damned lunatic. It isn't as if this was an easy channel, sir."

He paused. Glanvil stood drumming with his fingers on the berthing rail, staring downward at the black water that washed through the lower steps of the gangway.

"What the devil's this ladder doing here? Man the falls and hoist it at once."

Glanvil mounted slowly to the bridge. The wind suddenly took him abeam with a terrific buffet. Hendry was right. He knew it. In such a wild confusion of pres-

sures he could not guess for a moment what would come next. To attempt the passage of the Panda channel under these conditions was what any cautious seaman would consider madness. From the instability of the glass and the strange behaviour of the wind it seemed probable that something in the nature of another tornado threatened. Supposing it caught him, with the merest flick of its tail, in the middle of the channel? Well, that would be a pretty end to the whole adventure. Fortune of war!

His fortunes were in the ascendant. Within the last hour he had attained what he believed to be the crowning moment of his life. On such a pinnacle of achievement he felt himself master of all the elements. And his task was not completed. If daylight showed the *Vega* still anchored in Panda, Cardozo and his rifles would soon be aboard. This time, perhaps, a warrant for murder. Who knew if Salvia were dead or alive? The thing that Hendry called prudence was really cowardice. In all his life he had taken too few risks. That was what was wrong with it. The triumphs of the last few days had shown him his own strength; now he must test it in the field for which it had been particularly trained. He was a seaman; here he must show his seamanship.

Hendry came up behind him.

"You see how it is, sir? Joking apart, I think we'd better stand by for an hour or two."

"I'm not joking, Hendry. The tide's on the ebb, and I've no intention of losing it. You'd better tell the third to take Cochran's station on. . . ."

A roar of escaping steam drowned the end of Glanvil's

sentence. Cheadle was blowing off. The sound cheered him. It showed him that steam was at his service.

"I was just saying," he continued, as the uproar subsided, "that Harvey had better take Cochran's station on the poop. Cochran has a wound in the shoulder; he must have lost a lot of blood."

"Cochran went aft five minutes ago," Hendry answered in an aggrieved voice.

"Then you'd better go for'ard. I shall take the wheel myself."

"I was just about to say, sir," Hendry began, "that if you waited another hour or two the wind might fall, and you might get a chance of seeing the channel."

"And missing the tide. We shall see a damned lot anyway with the sun right ahead. The leadsmen are good enough for me."

"Quite so, sir, quite so. I was only going to suggest——"

Glanvil turned on him with a sudden fury.

"Good God, Mr. Hendry, are you navigating this ship or am I?"

"Very good, sir. Very good."

And Hendry departed, shaking his head as he went.

He felt happier now that he was alone. He knew well enough that Hendry's arguments were sane and valid. He did not wish to hear them. He would rather listen to the persuasions of his own hopes. As he walked slowly to and fro awaiting the first suffusion of daylight, another came to reinforce his determination. This was the third night of rain in Panda itself; up-country, as Cardozo had

told him, the rain had broken more than a week ago. Surely by this time the volume of water in the estuary should have been increased. He had entered the channel safely at the extreme limit of low river, and though the Panda cargo was heavier than that he had discharged, he did not believe that the *Vega's* draught could have been increased by more than six inches, a depth for which flood water must surely compensate. That was a point on which he should have been informed. Now it was too late. What matter? In any case, he had delivered himself into the hands of destiny.

From another point of view the uncertain weather which made his departure so dangerous suddenly revealed itself as a godsend. In the ordinary way he could not have cleared from Panda without the official recognition of the port authorities. The behaviour of the glass absolved him from these formalities. He could see his absolution as it would be written to-morrow in his log . . . *judging that a tornado threatened . . . danger of a landlocked anchorage . . . safety of the ship.* . . . It was as clear as daylight. Assuredly his luck was in!

Out of the thinning blackness in front of him the bent bow of Vumba declared itself; the snout of Ras M'zinga lay on the water like a shadow of a cloud; between them a steely line of sea, dark, secret, inexorable, beneath whose broken surface his fate lay waiting for him. The trill of Glanvil's whistle went weakly down the wind. On poop the fo'c'sle head Cochran and Hendry heard it. Like distant thunder the rumble of the anchor-cables began, and, in that moment, the *Vega* ceased to be a lifeless hulk

of iron tethered to earth; she became a living creature, mobile and self-reliant; her bulk was one huge extension of Glanvil's body, and her brain was his.

Now the sky glowed as though the wind had fanned its smoulder. Blacker and clearer grew the snout of Ras M'zinga, a cloud no longer. Vasco di Gama's pillar leapt out in silhouette. In Glanvil's mind the channel seemed clear as if the chart were spread gigantically before him. It was not for nothing that in moments of abstraction and distress his eyes had stared at the open pages of the Pilot. Hendry was an old woman, and that was all about it. Now Hendry signalled from the fo'c'sle head. Cochran, half lost in shadow, followed him from the poop. Glanvil pulled over the telegraph level to "Stand by!" He took the wheel. "Slow!" With a shudder of ecstasy or dread the *Vega* answered to her helm.

From that moment Glanvil had no time for thought. He was a man possessed. Through hands, ears, eyes, through every channel of sensation, his eager brain received the varied stimuli of the organism that he controlled. Into his fingers flowed the resistance of the *Vega's* helm; his ears, like watchful clerks, checked and recorded the leadsmen's cries; his eyes were set upon the sea's mysterious surface where the broken water of the Caballos Marinhos slowly flushed with a baleful orange light. In that possession there was no room for doubt. With the mechanical deliberation of an absolute certainty he steered the *Vega* onward. Slowly she stole between the horns of those converging headlands. Between them, gay and inviting, sparkled the gold of open sea. In an-

other five minutes . . . three minutes . . . two minutes . . . she would be through. Glanvil's heart glowed like the sky with pride and mastery. Now he scarcely listened to the leadsmen's cries. He could have told them, before they shouted, what the depth would be. One minute. The channel shallowed at the very moment that he expected. This was the bar. In another thirty seconds——

A curious resistance, gentle, but unmistakable, like the application of a pneumatic brake. And then a sudden shudder.

"By God, sir, she's aground!" Harvey cried.

Already Glanvil's hand had rung through automatically to the engine-room. *"Astern!"*

"Yes, Harvey, she's aground. We've done it this time."

And he knew that he could do no more. Her screw might churn the water impotently for ever; but the silt of the Panda River had clutched her bows and would not let them go.

Hendry came running up the bridge, his mouth full of urgent advice. Glanvil did not answer him. There was nothing that Hendry could suggest which his mind had not assayed and discarded in the second that followed the disaster. Empty the forepeak? Jettison Cardozo's copra? All that was well enough, but already the tide was ebbing. In another hour the whole keel would be aground, sinking deeper and deeper into greedy silt. And then would come Cardozo, malignant, and triumphant at last. He rang down to the engine-room: *"Stop!"*

"No good, Hendry, no good," he said. "Anchor astern. Make her as snug as we can. No miracles in these days."

Hendry and Harvey descended to the main deck, Glanvil turned to follow them.

But even as he spoke there came what seemed to him not a miracle, but an insensate aggravation of disaster. Some power of darkness, mightier than any wind conceivable, caught at his body and flung it with a crash into the railing of the bridge. He clutched at a stanchion and held it. It had no solidity. He and the stanchion and the shattered matchwood of the flying bridge were carried away together. In one clear moment of his fall he saw the wreckage of the ship's boats whirling above him like shredded kites. The next instant he was lying flat, clinging for life to the stripped fo'c'sle head. Beside him, green with terror, lay a Chinaman, naked to the waist.

It was curious. He couldn't understand. Ah, yes. . . . Now it grew clear. Tornado. That spinning devil whose dark gyrations had upset the glass. A lunatic; Hendry's words. Well, now the destruction begun by his own pride and folly was complete. Her bows held in a vice, stern-on to that revolving fury. Stripped, shattered, everything gone by the board. What would Lloyd's say about that? Nothing mattered. He'd lost his ticket anyway. Nothing. Mrs. Salvia?

That was too much. Not only a broken seaman, but a murderer. It was impossible that the deck-houses could have stood that impact. He could not see; he could not open his eyes for wind. Was anything left, anyone but this half-dead Chinaman and himself? If he could

reach them . . . if only he could reach them! For a moment he loosened his grip; the wind dragged him backward. No, no . . .

Something had happened. The wind was losing power. The deck to which he clung was lifted bodily into the air. It rose and fell, not violently, but with a gentle fluidity. Impossible! But it was true. A wave that was like that of an earthquake took the *Vega* and swept her seaward. Straight out to sea she drifted, whirled like a feather on a pond. And, like a floating feather, the wind left her with a scornful flick of its tail. She lay there, quietly heaving on the broken golden water, and Glanvil scrambled to his knees to see her shining in her white deck paint like an angel. Apart from the loss of the flying bridge and the boats she seemed to be unscathed.

With shaking limbs he picked his way aft through the heaped wreckage, and climbed on to the main deck. At the same moment Hendry emerged from the saloon. He started as though Glanvil were a ghost.

"Thank heaven, sir," he gasped. "Oh, my God, my God! I can't believe it. We thought you'd carried away, sir, with the bridge."

"Came down flat on the fo'c'sle head. No other damage done? Everyone all right?"

"Everyone, sir. The third and I just reached the alleyway in time. It didn't hit the poop. It was the second that saw you carried away. Thinking you'd gone I was just hurrying up to the wheelhouse to take charge."

"Mrs. Salvia all right?"

"She and the child are in the saloon, sir. We didn't

tell them what we thought had happened to you. This is an Act of God, sir, in the proper meaning of the term. In my opinion, that is," he added hurriedly.

"I quite agree with you. An Act of God."

Slowly Glanvil mounted the ladder to the wheelhouse. Just as if nothing had happened the quartermaster smiled and touched his cap. A phlegmatic race. . . .

He grasped the telegraph lever. Once more the harsh bell jangled below. With the rapidity of a healthy reflex the signal was answered. Words came into his mind: *I believe in the resurrection of the dead. Resurrection!*

That was the only word for it.

Glanvil glanced at the compass, then took the wheel in his own hands. He rang down to the engine-room, three times in swift succession:

Slow. Half-speed. Full speed ahead.

Anacapri: 1923.
Cairo: 1925.

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SET UP, ELECTROTYPED AND PRINTED BY THE VAIL-BALLOU PRESS, INC., BINGHAMTON, N. Y. · PAPER MANUFACTURED IN SCOTLAND AND FURNISHED BY W. F. ETHERINGTON & CO., NEW YORK · BOUND BY H. WOLFF ESTATE, NEW YORK.

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